AN OLD-FASHIONED SENATOR

A STORY-BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS

Harris Dickson

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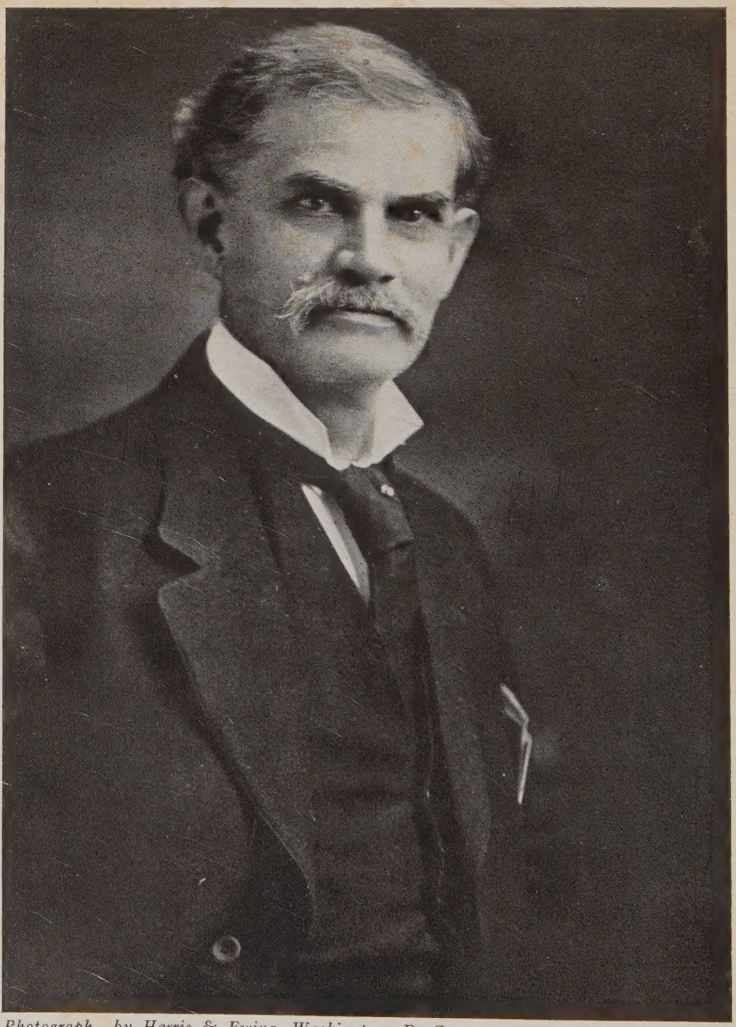

Photograph by Harris & Ewing, Washington, D. C.

SENATOR JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS

AN OLD-FASHIONED SENATOR

A STORY-BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS

BY

HARRIS DICKSON

Author of "Old Reliable in Africa," "The Unpopular History of the United States," etc.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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Have I not broken his bread and eaten of his salt? Am I not his friend? Therefore I shall exercise the prerogative of a friend—and talk about him.

FOREWORD AND CONFESSION

We are warmed in body and mellowed in soul by a huge wood fire that leaps crackling up the chimney on Cedar Grove Plantation. The genial host sits smoking beside his hearth. A guest makes himself at ease and peace with all the world. We gossip; we think aloud unhampered by restraint or caution; and the sanctity of the roof above us guards against betrayal.

Under such comfortable circumstances the material for this sketch was stored away in memory, but without the consent of Mr. Williams that it might be printed. Apparently I have not kept faith with my friend, and shall confess.

During his years in Washington I asked no favor at his hands as Representative or Senator and desired none. All that I wanted of him—his inspiring companionship as a man—he gave most generously. Never before did I approach him with an ulterior motive, and never before did I find however slight a barrier. But John

Sharp Williams dislikes everything that savors of press-agentry, and would have refused to let me write about him. Had I insisted, his decisive "No" must have ended the effort. I did not insist; we merely sat and talked. Then I wrote anyhow, and squared my conscience by submitting the work to Mr. C. H. Williams, the Senator's brother, and to Judge Edwin R. Holmes. So, with family and friends conspiring together, the thing is done.

Day after day, while swapping yarns with the Senator, I could make no notes. At the first appearance of a pencil he stopped me, saying, "Don't do that." Consequently, in these pages there may be minor errors; yet the greater truth is here, the truth of a brave, clean spirit, the spirit of an honest gentleman.

Historians will search otherwhere for certain facts. Here they will find only the lover of his family, the lover of his country, the lover of books and flowers, and the lover of his fellowman.

This is no political memoir. Its unwilling victim had refused many offers to publish reminiscences, which, if he could be induced to set his hand to them, would be vigorous, illuminating

and salty. For more than a generation John Sharp Williams has seen, and frequently acted an important part in, what went on at Washington. Straightforward and outspoken as he has always been, he now seems averse to talking about such matters in print. The strife, the animosities are all behind him. And those friends with whom he chats so freely will not violate his confidence. Were he to write a volume of experience and criticism, every syllable of it would say something. That's his caliber of intellect, for, according to the negroes on Cedar Grove Plantation, "Ef Marse Johnny opens his mouth, he sholy speaks a mouthful."

Reminiscences of public men should confess the motives, the feelings, even the errors and prejudices, which have controlled their acts. No statesman, after thirty years of congressional service, could write such truths about his own career without also revealing what he then conceived to be facts concerning his contemporaries, when, perhaps, the soberer years have proven that he misjudged them. Some of his adversaries may be dead; others may yet live, broken and discredited. And the generous hand will refrain from hurling another stone.

A politician—if he be buried or voluntarily retired, we call him a "statesman"—a politician in no wise differs from a private citizen. The atmosphere that surrounds him is the same. Patriotism, fair intent, petty malice, ambition, fact and falsehood—all these mold his mind and shape his course. If one of them should frankly tell the truth in his memoirs, a marvelous document of human life would be produced. But this brand of honesty is rare. When a man attains the reminiscent age, he also reaches the compromise age, and prefers to shake hands over the bloody chasm by extending to everybody a bouquet. His book becomes a vapid dose of emasculated mush.

John Sharp Williams will do neither one nor the other. He cannot write twaddle, and is done with contentions. Desiring naught but peace, he has retired to the family plantation, in the halls of his fathers, beside the graves of his dead. So this sketch shall deal less with the senatorial career of a brilliant Mississippian, than with glimpses of the personality that old friends know and love as "John."

HARRIS DICKSON.

Vicksburg, Mississippi,
May, 1925.

THE BOY WHO DID HIS OWN THINKING

What makes the world spin round and round?
Where are these saints and sinners bound?
Where do all good and bad boys go?
Thinking Johnny wants to know.

AN OLD-FASHIONED SENATOR

I

"Statesman, yet friend to truth, of soul sincere;
In action faithful and in honor clear,
Who broke no promise, served no private end,
Who gained no title, and who lost no friend."

SOMETIME during 1865, that bitter period of southern defeat and discouragement, one lone derelict soul went drifting about the streets of Memphis. The armies of his country were beaten. The Stars and Bars had been furled forever. The Confederacy was fallen. His social and economic system lay in ruins. The invader was master of his homeland. These trivial annoyances he did not consider.

On every corner groups of people huddled together, ex-Confederate soldiers whose landmarks were swept away, exchanging anxious whispers as to the future. Amongst them all that one soul walked alone; he consulted with nobody, confided in none. What did these

trifles matter—transient shadows of the day—when his superior mind was peering into the endless æons of eternity? That's what bothered the boy—where was he going to spend those millions and millions of centuries? His name was John Sharp Williams, aged eleven years, and he wrestled with perplexity.

What could he do to be saved? What would become of his immortal soul? The problem pestered Johnny, and it was characteristic of the embryonic Senator, then aged eleven, that he must search out the answer for himself.

How could he get to heaven? There must be some orthodox main line running from Memphis to Pearly Gates, and Johnny didn't mean to catch the wrong train. He desired to learn about the conductor, to study the schedule, and to know precisely under what authority it was operated. With eternity at stake, Johnny could take no chance of being side-tracked in an uncharted wilderness of error.

Having no daguerreotype to hamper our imagination, we are free to picture a small thin boy, with keen blue eyes, and bushy brown hair that inclines to curl. He is dressed in a short

roundabout, and knee pants, made by some skillful black seamstress at home. For love of "Marse Johnny" she had braided the edges of his tiny jacket, and defined every pocket with braid. His stockings are doubtless white. He walks with the same quick alert step that afterwards became so familiar when John Sharp Williams was intent on getting something done.

While drifting through the streets of Memphis he is most intent. He wanted to *know,* not to guess. He must probe to the very bottom of wrangling theologies and inform himself. This matter of catching the right train could not be left to anybody else. Do it himself, that's the John Sharp Williams method. First he investigated the Sunday service that was being held in the basement of a secular school that he attended—The Christian Church, or Campbellites. Sabbath after Sabbath the attentive child sat listening to and digesting its doctrine. But somehow or other their spiritual food did not agree with him, nor satisfy his hunger. Then Johnny tried the Baptists for a while, but his mature judgment—aged eleven—balked at accepting their dogma. So he deserted the sanc-

tuaries of immersion for those of falling from grace. Not for him. With an humble and contrite heart, Johnny feared that he had never had any grace to fall from. Never. Grace was precisely what he craved, grace, plenty of grace. Downcast and disappointed, he took up his pilgrim's staff to seek eternal verity amongst the Presbyterians, who only added to his doubts. His mind got muddled. To Johnny it seemed incredible that *his* particular soul, scarred by the sins of eleven years, should have been picked out, chosen, foreordained and set apart for salvation. No, he'd have to be washed. In his present contamination no divine power would select John Williams for a reserved seat on a cloud. Foreordination did *not* fit his case.

On he trudged again, this time looking in upon the Episcopalians, where, after two or three visits, he began to perch on the very edge of a pew with thirsty eyes glued upon the preacher. "Apostolic Succession," authority handed down from the founders of religion to Saint, to Prelate, passed along through nineteen unbroken centuries to this man whose inspired voice now thrilled him. Here was genuine au-

thority, and John Williams, aged eleven, arose convinced.

Immediately the small proselyte got himself baptized and confirmed. Yet, when the bishop paused before him at the confirmation table, his earth-polluted lips dared not touch the sacred vessel. Though the churchman might have wondered at the child, as a man of sense, he passed on.

At last Johnny had secured his berth on the most authentic limited; and, serene in that peace which passeth all understanding, he now went down to visit Grandma Sharp at Cedar Grove Plantation.

On every previous visit he had gone to see his grandmother with a hilarious irresponsibility, and no skeletons to hide. But a back-sliding boy —aged eleven—who has just allied himself with the Episcopalians, cannot be entirely frank to a militant Methodist grandmother.

When Johnny reached Cedar Grove he found the old lady sitting beside her fire, her needles clicking and chair creaking as she rocked to and fro. There was something, too, in her attitude which warned John Williams that he had better

let sleeping dogs lie, that he had better not rouse her Methodism by mentioning his recent venture in religion. But, presently, as she and the little boy sat talking together, Grandma Sharp remarked, more tolerantly than he could have hoped,

"Johnny, they tell me you have joined the Episcopals?"

"Yes, Grandma;" he tried to be braver than the boy who'd used his hatchet on a cherry tree.

"I'm sorry," Grandma shook her head; "mighty sorry."

"But Grandma, one church is as good as another."

Johnny just said that. He did not believe that one church was just as good as another. He had dissected them all. But Johnny was in a tight fix, and had to smooth things over. As he well knew, grandmother would refuse to admit that any church was as good as hers, or admit that the others were churches at all. Back and forth she rocked, her needles clicking and her jaw set firm.

"Well, Johnny," she said, "what's done, is done. But I have always observed after people

join the Episcopals, or the Masons,—especially *young* people,—after that they hardly ever join *any* church."

Grandmother Sharp stuck to her own notions which she made no pretense of mitigating. Earthly matters might be compromised, but not that. Plain-spoken truth at times became an uncomfortable virtue amongst the kinnery of John Sharp Williams—the Sharps, Ridleys, Allisons, and his father's obstinate Welsh heredity —none of whom were mealy-mouthed. They were a direct-minded set of folks who thought what they thought, and came awkwardly near to saying so. This trait of a man, this nightmare of the politician, has many times been exhibited by Senator Williams, and drawn him into fights which a little pussyfooting might have craftily avoided. After more than a generation in public life, no enemy has ever accused him of double-dealing, and no friend has ever doubted where he stood.

Anyhow, Johnny stood pat on his new religion. As the boy was a Sharp-Allison-Williams himself, the wise old lady had more gumption than to argue with him. Three hun-

dred years ago one Oliver Cromwell, of local repute for stubbornness, had tried to argue Bishop Williams out of Carnarvon Castle, and ultimately succeeded, against a tooth and toe-nail defense. But Oliver failed to capture a solitary man of Clan Williams, for the Bishop had sworn that no kinsman of his should fall into the hands of Cromwell. So when he found himself pushed over the very edge of Wales, Bishop Williams commandeered three small vessels and sailed with his exiled clan to America. Grandmother Sharp realized that by force she might drive little Johnny from his Castle Ecclesiastes, —and also drive him from Cedar Grove. Therefore, grandmother and grandson tacitly agreed upon a truce. They chatted about shoes, and ships and sealing-wax, chatted about everything except Apostolic Succession and falling from grace, for he and Grandma Sharp were great friends. And friends they remained until her death in 1885.

Long before John's religious explorations the boy was half an orphan, being only five years old when his mother died, leaving him and his baby brother, Christopher Harris (Kit)

JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS, THREE YEARS OLD

This daguerreotype now hangs on the same hook beside the mantel where Grandma Sharp placed it nearly seventy years ago

Williams, in the care of her mother. Soon thereafter the Civil War had broken out and their father joined the Confederate Army. In the spring of 1862, at bloody Shiloh, the gallant Colonel "Kit" Williams had been killed while leading his Tennessee regiment. Friends brought his body home to Memphis, where a public lying in state was planned, and an imposing funeral. But Grandfather Sharp said, "No. I'll take Kit down to the plantation and bury him there." So the sorrowing old man carried two little orphans, with their grandmothers, to Cedar Grove, where amidst the peaceful sunshine and the flowers he laid their fallen soldier to his rest. Today, from the ex-Senator's easy-chair on the lawn at Cedar Grove, it is but a step to that grave so deeply revered. And those who understand our southern people must comprehend how powerful are such traditions, holding a man steadfast to his anchorage of honor.

"Grandma" Sharp was not actually the lads' grandmother, except by the wonderful sweetness of her love, and the power of her influence upon their lives. Their maternal grandmother was a Ridley, Grandfather Sharp's first wife,

who died in the thirties. His second wife, the one known as "Grandma" Sharp, was an Allison, and a sister to Grandmother Williams. With these two ladies, and Grandfather Sharp, our future Senator lived on Cedar Grove at the opening of the Civil War. There death again touched him very near the heart, for Grandfather Sharp died in the summer of 1862, not many months after Colonel Kit Williams had fallen on the field of Shiloh.

Cedar Grove Plantation lies in Yazoo County, Mississippi, to which Grandfather Sharp had emigrated from Tennessee, cleared away the forest, plowed his fields, and begun raising cotton. He was a competent man, a just man, a kind man, a man of unyielding will; and he made a success. During these pioneer days, Grandma Sharp had always been his partner, a stout-hearted Scotch-Irish woman, whose opinions must have been worth heeding, for their influence yet endures in that old house.

During those constructive times of building homes, school houses, churches, and founding a civilization, the women led no idle lives. Although her husband might be a large planter,

and considered rich, the daily routine of Grandma Sharp knew but little of luxurious indolence. A hundred and fifty negroes, and three thousand acres of land, simply will not manage themselves. Somebody must look out for details. That somebody was Grandma.

Mrs. Sharp must rise early, perhaps with Johnny tagging at her heels, and oversee the dairy. The dairy of Grandma Sharp was no concrete-floor affair, with running water, patent contrivances, and a porcelain feed-trough. She was lucky to possess a milking-shed, with clapboard roof, for shelter from rain or sun. Otherwise, her negro women milked the cows in an open lot, shoe-deep in mud or dust, with a small black boy to hold off the calf. Happily for grandmother's peace of mind she had never been introduced to the assorted germs of science. She did her best to keep the milk clean, and that's all. And little Johnny, clamoring for a cup of fresh milk, didn't worry his head about bacteria. The luxury of ice being unknown, Grandma set her milk in pans, on cool shady shelves, for the cream to rise, to be skimmed and converted into butter. This, too, was a laborious process,

churning by hand, instead of having modern appliances by which she could touch a button and separate the raw material into finished products —butter, cream-cheese, buttermilk, clabber—as a pig is apportioned on his last sad journey through the packing-house.

From the dairy, Grandma proceeds to her spinning-house, where the little boy delights to watch the whirling old-fashioned wheels, from which skillful women draw out threads that are passed on to the weaver, who weaves rough cloth by hand. Then the sewing women—a hundred and fifty negroes wear lots of shirts. In the laundry, strong arms scrub the clothes, while Marse Johnny plays with bubbles that rise from home-made soap. Next the big house, which must be regularly cleaned, acres of hall floor and wall space, for women with mops and buckets, for men on stepladders.

Perhaps some company drops in; company was always dropping in. Every plantation home was more or less a house of public entertainment. Strangers would stop for a meal and stay for a month, with their families, servants, horses and dogs. Grandma made them welcome.

If a negro be taken ill in the quarters, Grandma attends him, administering calomel and quinine, or sending for the plantation doctor if his case were serious.

By no means could Grandma neglect the "Children's House" where an aged crone takes care of all babies while their parents go to work. Forty black youngsters, with measles and colic, will prevent any woman from getting lazy. And Grandma must keep her vigilant eyes wide open to guard against contagious diseases amongst these little folks.

When Grandma finally sat down in her rocking-chair, she knitted socks and mended Johnny's pants while she was resting. Aside from these household duties, Grandma Sharp had nothing whatever to do.

The so-called "lavish hospitality" of an ante-bellum planter is a myth. Grandfather Sharp was well off: he had a big house, enough to eat, and plenty of servants. Yet he could not offer his guest a bath without having two stout negroes drag in a tub, a huge round wooden tub from the laundry, then tote water in buckets until it was filled. There was no separate bath

and lavatory, so the function of tubbing must occur in the guest's own room, twenty by twenty, with a fourteen-foot ceiling, impossible to heat in winter. There the guest stands in his tub, before a crackling log fire, frying on one side and freezing on the other, by his host's impartial hospitality.

After his bathing is complete, two negroes come again to empty the tub, bucket by bucket, until they make it light enough to be carried away.

Grandfather Sharp was a progressive person. The pioneer of all that neighborhood he purchased a long tin tub, so cunningly constructed that a human being might sit at half length, without doubling up his legs like the Sultan on a divan. This tub was that same abomination of the devil, painted green on the outside, which a Massachusetts legislature had once enacted the most stringent laws to prohibit. But times had changed, and Massachusetts was now selling them at a godly profit.

When he acquired this patent tub, the country folks began to gossip about Grandfather Sharp—saying that the old man was putting on

airs, that he was sinking into a state of degenerate sloth and effeminency. It was even hinted that in his Yankee-bought tub the bather need only pull out a stopper from the bottom and the tub would drain itself. Yankees were getting powerful smart with their new-fangled contraptions.

Prior to the happy arrival of this elongated tin tub at Cedar Grove, his implacable black nurse would cleanse Marse Johnny on Saturday afternoons—more frequently in case of accident. For this spectacular bit of pageantry a laundry tub was set on the lawn, out of doors, and filled to its very brim. Then several swift young negroes would catch the boy, to be stripped, lathered, and otherwise maltreated with a scrubbing brush, while every little negro on the plantation assembled to observe the proceedings. It has been insisted that no man is a hero to his own valet, and we find it difficult to imagine how this grave and reverend Senator contrives to remain a hero in the sight of certain old negroes who yet live on Cedar Grove.

During the earlier days of the Civil War an epochal event occurred in little Johnny's life.

It happened unexpectedly while his grandfather sat on the porch, smoking and silent; for Grandfather Sharp always considered well before he made a move.

"John," he said, "you are big enough now to have a boy of your own. Pick out the one you like and I'll give him to you. Which do you want?"

"Allen." John promptly chose Allen, the most accomplished playfellow on Cedar Grove. At any kind of serviceable labor, such as operating a hoe or stimulating the energies of a mule, Allen was not worth his feed. But Allen had a genius for inventing all sorts of novelties that old Marster had never foreseen or forbidden. Allen could plan new games, and rarely protested when Marse Johnny changed the rules to suit himself. Which was fine for Johnny, and Johnny chose Allen.

"All right," Grandfather agreed; "send for Allen."

It might mean almost anything, a thankless job, a punishment, to be summoned by old Marster. So Allen approached with caution, batting his white eyes, and sidling up to the

porch. He was a sincerely black person, tar-faced and grinning, with a solid bone head that tapered upward to a point, like a haystack.

"Allen," old Marster inquired, "how would you like to belong to Marse Johnny?"

Old folks ask such foolish questions. How would Allen enjoy being freed from all responsibility? How would Allen like to spend his life in amusing himself instead of worrying with a plow?

"Yas, suh, Marster. Sholy, suh!" The boy opened his mouth very wide, and showed every tombstone tooth in his head.

"Very well, Allen, now listen," his abdicated master informed him. "Marse Johnny is now your master. You will take orders from him. Do what he says, unless he tells you to do something that is not permitted on Cedar Grove. Then *I'll* have you attended to."

"Yas, suh; sholy, suh." Allen didn't even listen; the little black boy and the little white boy were already exchanging signals; and happy days began, hunting, riding, swimming, every delightful adventure that two healthy lads could think of.

On the same lawn around the big house, where the Senator now sits and tells about it, there was then a flock of sheep, imported Spanish Merinos. The belligerent conduct of two old rams enraptured the boys. It was exciting sport to watch them back off and rush against each other, crashing together with a terrific shock.

"*Look* at 'em, Allen! Look!" Johnny exclaimed. "Let's you and me have a butting match? I can butt you off this brick walk."

Allen agreed. He always agreed to what Marse Johnny suggested, and listened intently while his young master laid down a brand-new set of rules.

"Allen, you take that end of the walk, at the gate. I'll start here at the steps, meet you in the middle—and *butt*."

"Yas, suh, Marse Johnny; sholy suh." This game was a cinch for the solid-headed negro.

So far as Allen had ever heard, old Marster had not forbidden a butting match on Cedar Grove. Nobody had ever warned Allen not to butt against Marse Johnny. On the contrary, he had been strictly enjoined to do whatever Marse Johnny ordered him. So Allen went down on

all fours, according to the rule, with his back against the gate, while his white antagonist glared at him and bellowed from the steps. Marse Johnny pranced about with lowered head, and pawed up dust. So did Allen. They advanced upon each other. Allen's kinky catapult of bone confronted Johnny's head of curly brown hair. Bang! They hit! Stars! Planets! Meteors! Since that front-end collision, the Honorable John Sharp Williams has never had quite as much sense. For some moments he had no sense at all, but lay quivering and twitching on the bricks, while the terrified Allen gazed down upon him. Then the black boy scrambled over a fence, and departed.

When the young master had partially recovered, lying semi-conscious upon a sofa in the hallway, with a wet towel around his head, he suggested to his grandfather that Allen might be spoken to concerning the affair.

"No, John," Grandfather answered solemnly. "If a white man is fool enough to butt against a negro, *he's* the fellow to be punished, not the negro."

It took forty years of rumination before John

Sharp Williams digested the humor of this, and made use of it in a campaign for the Senate. His opponent repeatedly asserted from the stump that there was nothing that a white man could not do better than a negro, nothing in which the white man was not superior to the negro. As a retort Williams would tell about Allen, and add, "Fellow citizens, if any voter challenges my statement, let him step forward and arrange a butting match with Allen."

Other years went by, and freedom had come to Allen, freedom which emancipated him from the service of Marse Johnny into the drudgery of the fields. So one day while young Williams was at home from college, Allen showed up, with the same old conical head.

"Marse Johnny," he begged, "I wants to belong to you some more. Lemme go wid you and be yo' boy."

"No, Allen; you're a free man now, and it's against the law."

"Agin de *law?* Ugh! Ugh! White folks sho' kin study up some mighty big fool laws. Marse Johnny, what you reckon dey'd do to me, ef I come back an' belong to you anyhow?"

"Don't know, Allen. They might hang us both."

Possibly it was disappointment, possibly the blazing sun of the field, or maybe it just happened that Allen, the butter, died.

On this three-thousand-acre tract in Yazoo County, Grandfather Sharp had built the house in which the retired Senator now lives. Its timbers were cut from his own woodlands by his own servants, hewn, sawn, mortised and pinned together. An honest house, built by an honest man, there it stands today, and will yet defy the storms of many, many years.

Contemporaries spoke of Grandfather Sharp as a successful southern planter. He wasn't. He was no planter at all. A planter is an optimist who clings to his precarious tenure in thousands of idle acres; a planter raises nothing but cotton; a planter belongs to his merchant, with a mortgage on his plantation and a deed in trust on his soul. Grandfather Sharp was not a planter. He paid as he went, and owed no man. His lands produced practically everything essential to feed his people. None of Grand-

father's negroes ever learned how to open a tin can.

Here on Cedar Grove, in the very room where this writer now sits, lengthily discussing a toddy with the Senator, here Grandfather used to sleep, a loaded shotgun at his elbow, guarding the stairway that led upward from within this room to a chamber above, where his daughter slept. Mississippi was then full of Indians. In Tennessee the whites suspected every Red Man as an enemy in disguise, and Grandfather, trusted none of them, not even the squat and lazy Choctaws, or the tall straight Chickasaws, who never made war upon English-speaking people.

Though the Mississippi Choctaws and Chickasaws failed to molest him, no Sharp could forget that Indians had scalped one of their kin, a lad who lived thereafter to be a stalwart man, among the few recorded instances. Scalping didn't hurt him, for the Sharps were a tough lot.

Such was the sturdy American stock from which John Sharp Williams descended, and such the environment of his boyhood.

Petty details make us see a man. When Thackeray visited America seeking an intimate

atmosphere for his "Virginians," he inquired most diligently about the personal characteristics of George Washington. One informant was telling him of the big things that Washington had done, when the British novelist interrupted, "Not that! Not that! What *I* want to know is, was he a fussy old gentleman that spilled snuff down his shirt front?"

STUDENT DAYS AND JUNKER WAYS

In Germany 'twas very clear
He'd leave the rapiers for beer.

II

Let Ignorance prate as it will, Learning has its value.

No lad can be more provincial than a young Southerner who never travels beyond his plantation boundaries. This truth, frequently humiliating, became impressed upon Johnny Williams at a raw and sensitive age. Now the Senator can laugh over it; then the boy could not. Johnny had got to be half grown, secretly encouraging the premonitions of a mustache and making clandestine experiments with a razor, before he had ever seen a white woman at work. He couldn't believe that even the Yankees permitted white women to work, to work publicly and openly without shaming their men who looked on. While cherishing this gallant delusion, Johnny returned to college, journeying by the northern route through Illinois. Not yet did natty waiters pass along the aisles, announcing, "First call for luncheon in the dining-car!" As a climax of luxury in those early seventies,

a brakeman inquired of passengers, "Do you want dinner at Centralia?"

Of course Johnny wanted dinner at Centralia, wanted dinner wherever he could get it; the quicker and more of it, the better that suited Johnny. So the hungry boy saw his name put down on the list, then stuck his head out of the window at every station for fear of missing Centralia. Presently the brakeman shouted, "Centralia! Twenty minutes for dinner!"

The train stopped. Passengers rushed out, Johnny among them. In the doorway of an eating house near the tracks, stood a man clanging a huge brass bell. The stream of passengers flowed that way. So did Johnny. They crowded into a dining-room and grabbed chairs at the tables. Having only twenty minutes to eat fifty cents' worth, nobody lost a second. Nobody except Johnny.

Johnny spied an eligible chair and started toward it, then stopped because of a lady who stood beside it. Of course he couldn't take that seat, and hurried to another. There stood another lady. He saw plenty of empty chairs, plenty of idle plates, but every chair had its

JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS
As a student at Heidelberg

standing woman, and Johnny found no place to sit.

"Take this seat," one of the ladies suggested, and drew it out.

"Thank you, Madame," the Southern lad bowed and refused. "Not while *you* stand."

Those Yankee men showed no respect for women, but actually snatched chairs away from them and sat down, gulping their food like field hands. One or two even dared to smile at Johnny's politeness, until the boy felt himself getting more and more indignant, especially when one busy feeder removed the pie-knife from his mouth long enough to say,

"Sit down, son. These women are waiting on the tables. Where'd you come from, anyhow?"

"Pardon me, sir." Johnny stiffened his long-legged and red-faced dignity. "I see no reason why I should satisfy your curiosity."

"Don't get mad, son," the Yankee chuckled. "I warn't askin' to offend you. But you must come from the South?"

"I do," Johnny snapped. "And proud of it."

"Thought so." The Yankee kept on laughing. "That's the only country on earth where

men won't sit down and eat if women are standing behind them."

After that Johnny gained much experience in brushing against the world, in learning that other peoples had different customs, and that some of their ways were good.

The country gentleman in England looks toward Eton as a proper school to send his son. Not wholly for what the lad may learn out of books, but for an intangible something else that he gets. To the sturdy squire on his own acres, Eton stands for solid British tradition, for those qualities that have built the Empire. The squire is a natural conservative who wants his son to think as his land thinks, and to follow the same safe way. Therefore the heir must go to Eton.

In many sections of the South, certain families yet gaze backward to the Old Dominion as a home nest from which their forbears fluttered westward, and to which their own exiled souls must one good day return. Entirely apart from the excellence of its curriculum, many a Southerner of the professional and landed gentry

classes, regards the University of Virginia pretty much as the British squire looks upon Eton. From the very cradle his son is predestined for Charlottesville, to tread the same lawn, to breathe the traditional atmosphere, and repeat his father's student pranks beneath its echoing arcades.

The old college possesses a distinct personality, as though Thomas Jefferson and other mighty figures of the past had wrought their ideals into every arch and doorway and noble portico. The student is saturated in its annals of achievement, and guided by its standards of honor never set down in words, but made binding by a sentiment among the student body. There the boy absorbs an intangible something else that clings to him through life.

John Sharp Williams had already attended the Kentucky Military Institute, as well as the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, when he went to the University of Virginia and studied law.

This was only a few years after the Civil War, and that venerable institution had fallen into financial difficulties which crippled it. The am-

bitious young Mississippian found that it no longer offered certain advantages which his ripening scholarship demanded. Other Southern colleges stood in even sorrier plight, and memories of bereavement were all too recent for the son of a father killed at Shiloh to consider a northern school.

At Harvard or Yale the high-spirited Southern lad could not be happy; not even at Princeton. So he turned his eyes toward the foreign universities, Oxford, Edinburgh, finally deciding upon lovely old Heidelberg, in the valley of the Neckar. This ancient seat of learning was founded in the fourteenth century by the Elector Rupert I. Next to Prague and Vienna it is the oldest in Germany. A wonderful little river winds in and out among its terraced vineyards, mirroring many a quaint old feudal mansion, skirting the base of a hill on which stands the dream-haunted Schloss, then flowing onward to the Rhine. Nowhere could be found a spot whose physical beauty, combined with legendary lore, would appeal more strongly to an imaginative lad.

Unless explained, certain of his bellicose ad-

ventures in Germany might mislead an observer to set him down as a hot-headed Southerner, as a swashbuckler, quarrelsome, and prone to brawling. Not so. This mild-mannered boy who went from Mississippi to Heidelberg was neither a bully nor a braggart. Try, if you can, to visualize him as a peaceable person. Much pugnacity had been butted out of Johnny Williams by his chastening collision with Allen. Even in his callow days he never blustered around with a chip on his shoulder; and usually respected the other fellow's chip, unless he saw some practical reason to disturb it. If there were good reasons, however, he would deliberately knock off anybody's chip, then let other chips fall where they might. Which subsequently enlivened many a stupid debate on the floor of the United States Senate.

Accept it, however, as a fact that the boy called "John," when he first arrived in Heidelberg, betrayed no inclination to provoke unnecessary squabbles. And his previous record in Mississippi was not one long red smear of bloodthirstiness. Furthermore, he knew a whole family of

negroes on the plantation at home who made a good living by minding their own business.

To Heidelberg he carried no hostile intentions, although entering a college that was dominated by the spirit of Junkerism. Prussian ideals molded public opinion, and "Honor" has been defined as "the public opinion of that class with which you associate." Few young men are immune to the praise of their fellows, or can defy their contempt; and, as every student was measured by the Junker yardstick, no self-respecting American could afford to show up short. Whether a bystander believed with the Prussians, or vigorously disbelieved, he *must* recognize their methods, and defend himself against the arrogance of their duelling corps. The Mississippi youth soon discovered that when a Junker accidentally trod on his toe, he must resent it, manfully, or the next moment that same aggressor would be stepping on his neck. Which explains what happened:

One dismal winter afternoon Williams and his friend, Cuthbert Jones, of Louisiana, went sauntering along the street. Young Jones was a survivor of the famous Liddell-Jones feud, in

which the men of his family had been wiped out, and this boy sent abroad for safety by his mother. Nobody who knew that strain of Louisianians would wantonly pick a quarrel with them.

It was atrocious weather—snow, thaw, sleet; the sidewalks slippery and narrow. Approaching them came a swaggerer who wore the cap of the Prussian Corps. The world was his, and he demanded every inch of it. Such an officer once ran his sword through an unarmed civilian, because the awkward creature failed to hustle out of his way quickly enough—a killing which caused discussion even in Germany until William the Warlord handed down his decision that the honor of the army must be kept unsullied.

This breed of bird bore down upon the two Americans, and young Williams whispered to his friend:

"Jones, if that fellow doesn't give us our part of the sidewalk, I'm going to dump him in the snowdrift."

"No, John, no. *Don't* do that. *Don't!*"

Too late. The wreck had already occurred. Débris strewed the street. The spraddle-legged

Prussian had been commandeering the entire walk, its middle and both sides. Not a mouse could squeeze past him. He had conceded no inch of gangway, until John Williams grabbed his collar and seat of the breeches, and bodily flung him into the street.

The astounded Junker rose up sputtering, and exclaiming, "*I* am the Freiherr von Stolzenberg," which meant that he considered himself a Personage of Great Importance, being the lord of some petty manor.

"No matter *who* you are," retorted Williams. "*I* might be Freiherr of the whole Damnorth America," and then he beat the German Freiherr to it by promptly handing out his card.

According to Prussian ethics, the challenger has choice of weapons. Their notion is to pick a quarrel with some fellow that they can lick, challenge the easy mark, and select a weapon with which they are most expert. That's why Williams got in his challenge first.

"Freiherr"—he bowed punctiliously—"you may send your seconds to this address." Then Williams and his friend passed on, with the German allowing them ample space to travel.

Two delighted Prussian seconds lost no time in finding the American seconds; then they lost a lot of time in protesting against the use of pistols.

"Ach Gott!" they gasped. "This quarrel is too slight, too trivial, for such *deadly* weapons. We insist on sabers, or rapiers."

"No bodkins for us," the American smilingly declined. "Our principal doesn't intend to go home with his face all slashed, and have folks jeer at him for getting his jaw cut on a beer glass."

"But *pistols!* Gott in Himmel! Pistols!" the Junker seconds objected. "Somebody may be hurt."

"Sure!" the American agreed. "That's what pistols are made for—to hurt somebody. Don't worry. It won't be *my* principal."

"But *my* principal?" the Prussian ejaculated.

"That's *your* business, to look out for *him.*"

In spite of all arguments and protests, the stubborn American stood fast upon his choice of weapons, with the Roman firmness of a mule. Every objection of the Prussians failed to budge him. Pistols it must be, colossal, murderous

pistols; and the two Junkers hurried away, gesticulating excitedly to each other.

Mists of morning shrouded the Neckar. Amidst the spectral haze those ancient houses loomed up like ghosts of antiquity, watching two young combatants who took position face to face, with loaded pistols. Behind a dead gray wall they stood at daylight. This was a brand-new kink in Prussian dueling, the businesslike silence, with no clash of sabers, no ring of steel on steel. Two ugly pistols were most unchivalric, and positively dangerous. The antagonists confronted each other, ready and waiting while the slow word was being given!

"One—two—three—fire!"

An uncanny stillness had got the Freiherr rattled. His teeth chattered, his finger fumbled with the trigger. Maybe he wasn't actually frightened. No Prussian Freiherr gets scared; but he fired, fired nervously, wildly, and fired *before the word*. That made the situation extremely awkward. His own shot was gone. Before him stood a menacingly cool young American, gripping a pistol that was still undischarged, gripping it with a hand that seemed

uncomfortably steady. And that crude American pointed it straight at him. The thing might go off, any minute. The Prussian seconds consulted; then one of them marched over to the American seconds, clicked his heels together, bowed, and inquired with solicitous anxiety,

"Does the Freiherr Williams demand his shot?"

"Certainly he does," his seconds answered for John. "Hasn't your man had *his* shot? Stand him up!"

The affair was not so funny. This joke now seemed to have switched around, and got all on one side. Prussians never appreciate that kind of humor. And the Freiherr von Stolzenberg was beginning to consider that he might have avoided that malicious-looking pistol by allowing the Americans to pass in peace upon the street. Nevertheless the Junker held himself gamely erect while the fierce American Freiherr took aim with agonizing deliberation. "One—two—three—fire!" Then Williams wheeled and sent his harmless bullet into a snowbank.

It was unbelievable, incredible, the thing that the American had done. No true-hearted

Junker would refrain from punishing an enemy, and gloating over it. The Germans gasped, they stared, then the talk broke out, a lot of talk, happy talk, apologies, and congratulations.

One of the American seconds happened to be a most extraordinary marksman. During their international exchange of confidences after the duel, he cautioned the Prussians that in future they must never give the word so slowly, because any American, especially those from the Southern States, at that distance, could split an apple. And merely to prove what he said, the American pointed to a glass insulator on the telegraph line, at which he fired, apparently without aim, and shivered it to atoms.

Another encounter, in which young Williams acted as second, was caused by the Prussian offender kicking a dog. To kick a small dog may be safe amusement, if the animal were a street cur, and had no friend. But this fox terrier belonged to an American girl, and her brother immediately impressed it upon the Junker that his sister's pet was a dog to be let alone.

Commonsense Americans naturally regard all this as claptrap and cheap heroics. It would

seem that college lads, supposed to be a selected class of young gentlemen, might pursue their studies without throwing men off the sidewalk, and brawling over dogs. But this was the Junker system, and in Rome a stranger must do as Romans did. Therefore, young Williams followed the fashion, on the true American principle of fighting for peace. After his encounter with the Freiherr, even the Prussian dueling corps thought it wiser to allow him passageway, rather than gaze down the muzzle of his barbarous pistol.

Looking backward to that period, one might imagine that American students in German universities should have formed ties of friendship among their fellows, and absorbed a certain amount of sympathy for German aims. If so, their friendship and sympathy would have stood the Teutonic allies in powerful stead during those crucial days of 1917. On the contrary, it is an extremely significant and sinister fact that every young American, to a man, came home from Germany utterly opposed to German ideals.

John Sharp Williams went to Heidelberg at

his most impressionable age, and learned a lot that was not printed in text-books concerning the effects of a *system* upon a *people*. The System handed down its opinions to the people, and, so far as possible, blocked all other channels of information. No child in Germany learned anything at school, or read anything in the newspapers, or heard any syllable from the pulpit, or from the lips of his father, except such distortions as his military masters ordered him to accept. Every child grew up believing in the mission of the German Superman, believing in the Divinity of Hohenzollern, and in God's direct command for Germans to dominate the earth. Whatever stood in their way must be destroyed, ruthlessly, pitilessly, in cold blood, and without malice. Children in Germany were taught that creed, and had no chance to believe anything else.

Even so far back as the early seventies a well-known American educator, after residing for years in Germany, made the prophecy to young Williams, "One day these people will startle the world by their planned, deliberate and passionless cruelty. You may watch them in the beer

gardens, and think them to be jovial and good-natured. Yet, under all that, they impress me as being devoid of any real affection for each other."

Americans who were students and thinkers regarded Germans as the most educable and organizable people in the world, but a people whom the ambition of military classes had trained to ideals that must wreck the peace of mankind.

Many of his German classmates, individually, Mr. Williams liked. But he found the System utterly abominable—an abject, cringing obedience to superiors, with an arrogant domineering tyranny over inferiors. Any youngster who is by instinct a gentleman, in the highest meaning of that misused word, must resent this constant bullying of men who cannot help themselves. He hates to see a man being kicked by the man above, then get even by kicking the man below. The young student from Mississippi could never comprehend a spirit that asserts its dignity by refusing to share the sidewalk with a fellow man, and brutally injuring a little dog.

Bear in mind that John Sharp Williams had come from generations of slave holders, had

grown up among negroes. He remembered how Allen was treated, and Uncle Nelse, and Aunt Alice. At home he felt the doctrine of "Noblesse oblige," felt that power carried with it the inescapable duty of kindness. And John Williams naturally contrasted the good feeling on Cedar Grove Plantation with the attitude of German personages in authority.

All of which left a vivid impression upon the lad from Yazoo County, an impression which remained with him when he came to sit in the Senate of the United States. Among his colleagues in both branches of the American Congress at that time were gentlemen who had been students at German universities. And it is most suggestive that every one of them, whether Democrat or Republican, was urgent and outspoken in his demand that any aggression of the Kaiser be promptly resisted. Their position then as Senators and Representatives must have been largely based upon what they had felt as boys—that the first encroachment must be stopped, or it would be immediately followed by another and a worse offense. That's Junkerism.

After the sinking of the *Lusitania* it developed

in a discussion on the floor of the Senate that Senator Williams (without attempting to quote him accurately) had advised the President, "If I were in your place I should give the Kaiser seventy-two hours' notice that he must apologize and pay all indemnities immediately, in cash, for every injury to American persons or property. If he refuses or delays I should call the Congress together and ask for the declaration that a state of war exists."

Upon hearing this, Senator Sutherland, Republican, exclaimed: "Would to God that the Senator from Mississippi *had* been President."

"No," said Mr. Williams; "I thank God that I was *not* President, because then I should have made that mistake"—of entering into war before the nation was thoroughly aroused.

Of late it has been a fad for American politicians to visit Europe and observe. When they return to these free shores, each man seems to follow the same formula, by striking a patriotic pose before the camera and uttering the novel exclamation, "I am a better American than ever." Sure-fire stuff! Country constituents eat it up.

John Sharp Williams must have overlooked that particular bet when he came home, for the press photographers preserved no record of his pose, and no biographer can set down his first words. We only know that he is now a wiser, broader-minded citizen of these United States because of his experience at a German university. He raises no howl about his Americanism, like the blatant tourist who makes himself so offensive abroad, for his is the well-considered judgment of a scholar that sees the good in other lands, and measures it beside the best that's in his own.

He does not now proclaim that all things in these United States are better done than all things in any other country, for America is young and has much to learn. But he did come home with a mind far more receptive, and with clearer standards of comparison.

Anyhow, he came sailing home from Heidelberg full even then of his ultimate intention. He'd go in for politics, he'd become a professional politician. For that purpose he was gaining a book education, as well as an extensive knowledge of men. Always the boy looked for-

ward to being a candidate, and swaying multitudes from the stump, after the fashion of a certain British spellbinder.

"Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat
To persuade Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote."

BACK TO YAZOO

Where the farmer and the lawyer,
All the sweating voters mix
In the wrangle and the jangle,
And the stew of politics.

III

From the Herr Professor at Heidelberg, to the Bellwether of Monkeytown.

ONCE a girl visited Europe with oodles of popper's money. She visited all over. Saw everything—at three minutes per thing. Checked off the sights in her guide-book. Had her luggage plastered with hotel labels. And collected postal cards. Then she returned to the Land of Liberty with a dinky little Paris hat perched on the outside of her head, and nothing whatever on the inside. Uncontaminated by museums and castles and cathedrals, the girl had remained imperviously American.

Once a boy went to study music in Germany. On his first visit home he was wearing spectacles. On his second visit he wore wooden shoes, and mangled his English verbs already. The boy had become Germanized.

Neither of these was John Sharp Williams, who sailed back from Heidelberg the ancient

and hoary to Memphis the young and bustling. Not that Memphis was then any newer and paintier than other towns manufactured at Grand Rapids and shipped out by sections; but it did seem different from Heidelberg on the Neckar. Memphis, however, was not his destination nor his destiny.

According to a wise old saw, "You can get the boy out of the country, but you can't get the country out of the boy." Perfectly true; and the boy from Cedar Grove Plantation didn't want to get the country out of himself. It was a proper part of him. Modern surgeons insist that our Creator made an awful lot of blunders by putting excess organs inside of men, things that have no business being there, such as tonsils, appendix, and various superfluities. Of course the Creator didn't know any better; and up-to-date knives rectify all mistakes. Yet the boy called "John" knew that he belonged to the country, and that a country heart belonged inside of him. Nothing could take that out. Every throb of his country heart beat in unison with the land, with the smell of fecund soil, and the intimate companionship of growing things.

His sympathy for people who cultivated their land never degenerated into the rantings of a satchel-mouthed demagogue, but was deep, sincere, almost silent; and rarely rose to his lips.

By some instinct of fitness, John Williams realized that city life would fail to satisfy him. So, after reading law for a while in Memphis, he removed to Yazoo City, within ten miles of Grandfather Sharp's old homestead. There he formed a partnership for active practise. This arrangement turned out most happily, his partner, Hon. D. R. Barnett, being an intense student, and ardent lover of a law point. No Romeo could emulate the adoration that Roscoe Barnett cherished for a high point of law; not a platonic love, but passionate, persistent, and pursuing. He reveled in chasing the elusive sweetheart. It thrilled him to trail her through the labyrinth, to hunt her out of the big books, to trap her amongst the little books, and triumphantly capture her in his brief.

On the contrary, Mr. Williams delights in nimble thinking on his feet. He likes to fight, but not with bludgeon or shillalah. For him the gentleman's clean white weapon—the rapier

of D'Artagnan rather than the club of Hercules. All his instincts of a cavalier found joy in the niceties, the dexterity, the courtesies of combat. So Mr. Barnett prepared their cases, searched out the authorities, and left the actual trial to his partner. Jack Spratt and his wife got along fine.

Newspaper correspondents of Washington City have frequently remarked that John Sharp Williams was one of the most alert, accurately informed and ablest debaters that ever sat in the United States Senate. And it is very easy to see where he got his training. No human experience can compare with that of a country lawyer to equip a man for the rough-and-tumble of disputation. He must not only be a student of law and of human nature, but must have his knowledge at his finger-tips. Facts must be in soluble form, instantly available. His daily work covers every phase of life. He is no specialist, running in a single groove, like the city lawyer. At ten o'clock he tries a negro divorce case before the Chancellor; at eleven he argues an obscure question of land title, that runs back perhaps to the technicalities of feudal conveyances. From that

he turns to a damage suit against the railroad for assault and battery on somebody's cow, or to a murder case in which the whole community has taken sides. The crossroads attorney must be a partizan, a peacemaker, a diplomat, and a scholar. He must be able in one breath to tell a yarn that tickles the jury into hilarious humor, then trace out infallibly the cobwebbed course of a contingent remainder.

For seventeen years John Sharp Williams did these things, and did them successfully. Although he does not pride himself on being a really great jurist, folks do say in Yazoo that John never lost a case in which he appeared for the plaintiff. This may be explained, in part, by the fact that he refused all litigation where he did not honestly believe his client to be right, and he could prove it. And if the moralities subsequently became uncertain, he always compromised.

In spite of this success, it is true that Mr. Williams never put his whole heart and soul into the law, because he regarded it as a temporary employment by which to prepare for politics as a profession. For a life work of public service

he had educated himself, and practised law only while he waited for a favorable opening through which he might break into the political arena. His chance arose, but not as he planned. It came, as all things came to John, in the shape of a fight: A gentleman of Yazoo County wanted to go to Congress, and Mr. Williams disagreed with his policies. Now there's this fixed fact to consider about John Sharp: As a private gentleman, no man can be more tolerant of another man's belief or actions. He never volunteers a dissenting opinion just to provoke argument. If the matter does not directly concern him, he can smile and keep a still tongue. But if the matter affects the public welfare, John habitually stations himself in the middle of a forty-acre lot, out in the wide, wide open, and proclaims his disagreement.

The Yazoo candidate had always been his personal friend, until as an aspirant for Congress the friend advanced certain propositions that Mr. Williams felt called upon to fight. And he began operations with a most characteristic declaration of war. No guerilla tactics, no bush-

whacking; straight to the candidate himself John went, and served his honorable notice.

"I'm going to beat you for Congress by running myself."

"You?" The surprised aspirant objected, "You don't know fifty people in the district, outside of Yazoo County."

"Right," Mr. Williams confessed; "I don't know twenty-five. And they are all lawyers, fit subjects for suspicion. However, I shall announce myself tomorrow. *Today,* you take the street, up one side and down the other. Get as many committals as you can. *Tomorrow,* I'll take the street, and tell people what *I* stand for. I'll tell them the truth from every stump, tell everybody the same thing, and have my platform printed. Then we'll fight it out."

Fight was precisely the correct word. Fight! Fight! Fight! On that drowsy summer day in Yazoo City, John Sharp Williams started a fight that lasted him for thirty years. And the peaceable person came to love it, just as his partner loved a law point.

Politics at that time in Mississippi did not resemble a meeting of the church vestry, and can-

didates were seldom wafted to the skies on flowery beds of ease. Mississippi, like most agricultural states, was then torn with political dissension, and a clamor of populistic demands. The most radical schemes were urged, and farmers seemed to have gone mad with the heat. As the farmers constituted about four-fifths of our voting population, their widespread madness made our hustings sound like bedlam. But they had the final say-so. What they really wanted, they got.

In Mr. Williams' first campaign for Congress the agriculturists thought they wanted what became so well-known as the "Sub-treasury Plan"—which contemplated that the United States should erect public warehouses, at which their products would be deposited and receipts issued. Upon those warehouse receipts the Government would lend money, almost to the actual value of the commodity, at three per cent. interest. The farmer imagined it would be a fine thing to drive his wagon into a Government warehouse, get a receipt, and $48.50 in money advanced on a fifty dollar bale of cotton. Then

let Uncle Sam hold the bag. Everybody else lets Uncle hold it, why not the farmer?

When eighty per cent. of American voters get their tails over the dashboard and set their heads on bolting in a certain direction, it's a pretty safe bet that the American office seeker will put himself in front with a megaphone, and holler, "Come on, boys! Follow me! *I'm* the people's friend!"

Had John Sharp Williams been a man of less courage and independent thought, who itched to fill a front seat in Congress merely for his own aggrandizement, he might have found it easier to fall in with the crowd, to curry favor with everybody, to pat them on their backs. That's the method by which a ward heeler worms himself into popularity.

At that time John had no political following outside his own county. Friends regarded it as suicide for him to stand against what seemed a mighty movement of the people, and predicted that John would never comprehend the trade of being a politician.

As commonly accepted, the politician's business is to make sure which way the biggest crowd

is going, then wriggle around and get into the lead. If he can guess right, that talent constitutes him a born leader of men. But John didn't even try to guess. He saw which way the crowd was traveling, and believed they were going wrong; a most formidable crowd, possibly four-fifths of the voters upon whose suffrage he relied.

Remember that he was then a stranger to this army, which with jaws tight-set marched solidly in one direction. Nevertheless, he stationed himself in the very middle of the road, right in front of that howling procession, with hand uplifted like a traffic policeman, and tried to stop the stampede. And John didn't wear white gloves, but handled popular heresies without any gloves at all. Before scowling assemblies of farmers he denounced their prize baby as a scheme to convert the National Treasury into a pawnshop. Which required grit, when to most of those old farmers the Sub-treasury Plan had become Article I Section I of their creed. They believed in it; they swore by it, and in the beginning they swore at this book-learned stu-

dent in store-bought clothes, who contended against their pet.

Fight, that's what John did from the first minute when he opened his mouth in opposition to the Sub-treasury scheme; and the more hopeless his battle, the harder he fought.

After compelling all the home folks to hear his views, John climbed into a buggy and became an itinerant broadcasting station.

Those were primitive days before horses were abolished, before the farmer had to figure on how many acres of cotton were required to purchase a gallon of gasoline. Besides that, a farmer stood some chance of crossing his own cowpath without being knocked down by a Ford. Railroads reached very few voters, the automobile none at all. So the candidiate made a house-to-house campaign on horseback, or in a vehicle. This was slow work, but had its compensations. He came to know the people, to get an accurate line on their feelings, motives, limitations and prejudices. The people also got a line on him; and measured the office-seeker with uncanny shrewdness. John's house-to-house campaign

was a liberal education, far superior to any book-learning that he had gained in Germany.

When Candidate Williams went trotting along the dusty road that ultimately led him to the Senate, he first of all steered his horse for Monkeytown. All his life he'd heard fables of Monkeytown, and determined to explore it. Every high-school boy in these United States, unless he be densely ignorant of geography, understands the elusive position of Monkeytown. It exists and does not exist. Monkeytown is a mirage municipality, a flitting ignis fatuus of cities. It is here, yonder, everywhere, there, and nowhere. You can't put your finger on Monkeytown; nobody knows its vague and intangible location. But voters lived there, and Candidate Williams intended to find it. He kept going, and kept going, then stopped his buggy in the road and asked a farmer boy, "How far is it to Monkeytown?"

"'Bout a mile, Mister; yonder way."

John was traveling in the right direction, but two miles farther, at the top of a hill, failed to discover the slightest symptom of a town. Again he halted to inquire of a one-gallus sovereign who was plowing among the sassafras shoots.

"My friend, how much farther is it to Monkeytown?"

" 'Bout half a mile—straight ahead."

The candidate was gaining on Monkeytown, but couldn't quite catch up with it. On he drove a half-mile; another half-mile; another mile; and saw nothing on either side the road, nobody except one old negro woman, driving her calf.

"Aunty," he called. "O Aunty! How far is it to Monkeytown?"

"Lordee, chile," the ancient creature grinned, "you done passed Monkeytown—back yonder, nigh two miles."

The location of Monkeytown might be uncertain, but Mr. Williams found its leading native to be a definite proposition. The candidate hitched his horse and sat down on a log to talk things over with Mr. Yarber, a citizen of whiskers and fixed ideas. Williams wanted that vote, and made himself most plausible. He outtalked old Yarber on the Sub-treasury scheme, and reversed his financial views, while the convinced Mr. Yarber kept pulling his whiskers and nodding his head.

"Fine, Mr. Yarber, fine," said Williams, ris-

ing from the log. "Then you'll vote for me?"

"Not yit, Mr. Williams. Not yit."

"Why? We agree on every point."

"No, we don't agree. When our folks held that election last year in Beat Three, you come out square agin the people."

"Me? *Against* the people?" A candidate may succeed in spite of theft, murder, and arson proved upon him; but not if he stands against the people. So the anxious John inquired, "How so, Mr. Yarber?"

"By votin' for that dern stock law in Beat Three."

"Oh!" The Williams ambition had struck a snag. "Well, Mr. Yarber, I'm sorry that you think a stock law is against the people. But I certainly voted for it."

"It *is* agin the people." Yarber shook his stubborn head. "It *is*. Folks is got cattle, and no land to pasture 'em on. How kin they feed a bunch o' bull yearlin's after you git the country all fenced up?"

That's where John Sharp Williams locked horns with the people. He might differ with voters on finance, foreign relations, sub-treas-

ury or religion—and squeeze into Congress anyhow. But no aspiring patriot dares to antagonize a widow woman's cow.

"Well, Mr. Yarber"—one of his justly famous ideas struck John—"if I'm against the people on a stock law for Beat Three, wouldn't it be a good plan to ship me as far away as you can, a thousand miles away, *to Washington?*"

"Million miles wouldn't do no good." Yarber tugged at his whiskers, shifted his quid, and expectorated copiously before his mouth was free to speak his mind. "'Cause you wouldn't no sooner git yo' seat warm in Washington, befo' you'd be corntrivin' some way to pass a stock law for Beat Three."

"But," Williams argued, and he's a powerful slick hand at argument, "the national government has nothing to do with stock laws in Beat Three, Yazoo County."

"Shucks, you'd *make* 'em have plenty to do with it."

"I *couldn't.* That would be unconstitutional."

"Possible so. But heap o' things what *used* to be oncornstitutional is cornstitutional *now.*"

"Mr. Yarber," the debater warmed up, "do you regard me as a good lawyer?"

"'Bout the best. Done made up my mind long 'go ef ever I needed a jawsmith—ain't needed one yit—I was aimin' to hire you."

"Thanks. And you don't believe I'd lie to you?"

"No. Your worst enemy won't never 'cuse you o' lying."

"All right, then, let me give you my legal opinion; as good an opinion as though you paid five hundred dollars for it. If the United States Government should attempt to pass a stock law for Beat Three in Yazoo County, it wouldn't be worth the paper it was written on. Any judge would throw it out the court-house window. And I'll act as your attorney, without a fee. *Now* will you vote for me?"

"No, Mr. Williams. I've just got that much cornfidence in yo' pigheadedness as to believe that after you got to Washington you'd figger out some way for the United States Government to change the cornstitution, and *make* a stock law, *anyhow,* for Beat Three in Yazoo County."

A house to house campaign requires tact. The

candidate meets voters in their own fields, and learns that big issues rarely gain or lose elections. Little things count most. Old Yarber might be reasoned out of an opinion on the League of Nations, but would act upon his prejudice against any man whom he suspected of hostility towards his muley red heifer.

The voters also learn. They talk with candidates, face to face, form their impressions from trifling acts or omissions, and cast their ballots accordingly. No two voters are exactly alike. Each must be handled differently. Sauce for the goose is *not* sauce for the gander, and a candidate had better know his man before approaching him.

Before tackling a new neighborhood, Mr. Williams would consult some well-informed person who was familiar with local gossip, somebody that knew who married who, knew who was friendly, and who at loggerheads; otherwise, every time the candidate opened his mouth he'd put his foot in it.

"Ben," he asked of Squire Meekins, a patriarchal mine of information; "Ben, how about those Fanshaws in the upper end of the county?"

"Straight folks, John. Clean as a hound's tooth. Ef you get old Mark on yo' side, the whole Fanshaw tribe 'll vote for you. Mark's the lead mule o' his drove."

That's the A. B. C. of practical politics—go after the leaders—and Candidate Williams agreed. "All right, Ben. I'll ride up to Fanshaws, take a few drinks with him, and——"

"Hold still, John. Hold still," the Squire warned him. "Don't make nary mistake. Old Mark mought take a notion that you're seekin' to buy his vote with whisky; an' ef he *do,* that whole neighborhood will kick over the traces. Co'se, you an' Mark is naturally 'bleeged to have a few toddies together. That's human natur. Folks can't git real downright sociable on creek-water. But you mustn't carry no licker o' yo' own. Ask Mark for some o' his'n. An' praise it, John; praise it *high.* That'll fetch him round to yo' side."

At this period of his career John Sharp Williams began to realize that a house-to-house campaign is not a mere still-hunt for votes, but a postgraduate course in the Applied Science of Human Nature. Yet there be theoretical patri-

ots who regard this as cheap and trivial, as beneath the dignity of a statesman. They deride "the mob"; they pity the proud Coriolanus exhibiting his wounds, and sneer at the Hon. Horatio Fizkin who kisses the babies. John Sharp Williams, however, did not regard his contact with people in this light, which partially accounts for the bigness of his own character, and for the influence which he came to wield. He believes that government is an institution for our general good, and that those who govern cannot choose what is best, unless they know how the people live, their aspirations, even their errors and their frailties. Of course, with his saving grace of humor, John never missed the funny side, tells stories and laughs over electioneering experiences.

It is highly interesting to follow the utterances of a public man wherein he estimates the character of another whom he admires, and then try to imagine how far he has revealed his own inner self. For example: Senator Williams once said of Abraham Lincoln, "He was, spiritually speaking, a lonesome man, sadly so, but throwing about himself a veil of anecdote and

humor—sometimes rough humor—to ward off intrusion. Hidden beneath this veil was not only serious but pathetic, and nearly always solitary, thought."

This may well be true of Senator Williams himself. Any casual stranger who hears him spinning yarns, might suppose that he saw nothing more in a campaign than the grotesque comicalities of its surface. Which would create an utterly false impression, not only to a listener but to one who reads these sketches.

John Williams honestly delights in knowing all sorts and conditions of men, and has unconsciously lived the doctrine which, in that same speech, he ascribed to Lincoln: an "abiding, patient, and loving reliance upon the rectitude of the purpose of the people——"

So it was, that when he came to sit in the United States Senate, confronted by the mightiest problems that ever arose before a nation, John had a pretty clear idea as to *what this Nation is.* From first-hand observation he had learned much. And he need not sail across the seas to a spectacled professor at Heidelberg, when he could learn of human nature from the

boy that drove his buggy, learn from loungers at a crossroads store, and learn from Squire Ben Meekins who now sat perched on the top rail of the fence around his cow lot.

"John," the Squire discoursed, "you's got right tol'able much gumption—for a lawyer. Now listen to your Uncle Ben. Country folks is powerful peculiar. You wants their votes, and you's *got* to cornsider their ways. Bein' *right* ain't nigh enough, onless they *likes* you. An' 'tain't no 'countin' for the notions that'll turn 'em. One time a candidate come gallivantin' through here, runnin' for Congress, same as you, and never got a vote at this box. Why? Did the folks figger that his politics was wrong? No. They didn't figger nothing; but old Jim Hargraves took a prejudy agin him. You see, John, somebody told that feller, same as I just told you, that Hargraves was He-coon in this neck o' the woods. So what does the candidate do 'cept beg old Jim for a chaw of his celebrated tobacco. Fine business, John; that gets votes every clatter, ef he hadn't spiled it. 'Cause when Hargraves handed him his plug, that fool candidate pulled out a knife an' *cut* off a chaw. That

settled *his* hash. Jim decided that he was stuck up, and felt hisself above the common people—too proud to bite off the same plug where Jim and *all* his friends bit off. That fool never got *nary* vote at this box.

"And, John, do you remember one crafty old cuss named Drenner? Sure to get elected every time his name went on the ticket? Ever hear how *he* raked in the votes? Pups, John, *pups.*"

"Pups?" John asked.

"Sure. *Hound* pups. Nothin' tickles these fellers more'n to brag on their breed o' dogs. And Drenner knew the name of every dog in this district. He'd lead a voter way off into the woods an' whisper, 'Dan, when is old Music aimin' to have pups? You *got* to gimme one. I'm *bound* to have one o' yo' strain for my pack.' Drenner went around like that, beggin' pups, an' rakin' in votes with both hands. Nobody couldn't beat him. John, you better keep yo' eye skinned for them fine p'ints, ef you want to go to Congress, an' stay there."

ROCKS IN THE ROAD

Which is the Road to Washington?
How can I get me there?
Some do talk, and some do walk,
While some pay Pullman fare.

IV

He studied Rules
In all the Schools,
And Ologies in Colleges;
But now he's Got
To learn a Lot
Of Human Critter Knowledges.

JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS wanted to go to Congress. For that purpose he must get votes, and use commonsense. So he sat at the feet of Wisdom, while Squire Ben Meekins, from the top rail of his cow-lot fence, coached him in the rural art of vote-getting.

"John," he said, "being *right* ain't nigh enough—onless the folks likes you."

That is truer of country districts than in cities, truer of small offices than of great ones. House-to-house campaigning brings the candidate into personal contact with the people, and, regardless of platform, no man can be elected if the voters dislike him. Country people usually express their feelings rather than political opinions when they cast a ballot.

So it behooves a seeker for public favor to know the little kinks and curls of human nature, and avoid giving innocent affront. This, of course, Mr. Williams would do, not because he was a candidate, but primarily because he was and is a gentleman.

Consideration for others is the very essence of that unbought grace of life which we designate as "gentility." The manner of a gentleman, if he really be such, is not superficial, but is the genuine kindness of his heart. This outward manifestation of inner grace will be even more careful toward those who have not been so fortunate as himself, those who lack the influences of wealth and birth, the refinements of education and culture. As a negro once said, "Now dere's de Cunnel: He never makes a nigger *feel* like a nigger." The kindliness of a gentleman is not toploftically handed down from above. It flows on the same level. His courtesy carries no sting, no reminder of a difference in station.

Most of the voters throughout Mr. Williams' district were plain farmers of that sturdy American stock which in Revolutionary days had won the Battle of King's Mountain. An honest folk,

they wanted only what was right. Mr. Williams made it a point to get acquainted with them, and gain their confidence. This he could never do by treading on sore toes, even though he might smile internally at the notion of anybody's toe being sore for such causes. For instance, no gentleman should wantonly affront Jim Hargraves by using a knife on Jim's plug of tobacco, if Jim considered that an insult. Of course Mr. Williams realized that if he began missionary work by sneering at Dan's hound pup, he might just as well stop trying to convert Dan from the error of Sub-treasury views. It were better to make friends by praising the sovereign's liquor, then sit down in a fence corner, where the voter might listen receptively to politics. Yet John never conceded one atom of principle, just as he agreed to disagree with old Yarber on the cow question.

The distinction between patriot and demagogue may be very, very hazy.

"In men whom men denounce as ill
I find so much of goodness still;
In men whom men pronounce divine
I find so much of sin and blot

I hesitate to draw the line
Between the two, where God has not."

The line between may lie in the motive, and even that is not unblurred. There are few demagogues, perhaps, that have absolutely no sense of public duty. And breathes there a patriot with self so dead that never to himself has said, "Patriotism may reflect credit upon me, or my sons."

Both the patriot and the demagogue may be seekers for power. John Sharp Williams did seek power, sought for it, fought for it; and got it. But his whole career proves that he used it for the very best good of his countrymen. And in the consciousness of duty well performed, in the abiding faith of his people, lies the only profit that he has reaped.

Before he came into power he must fight, fight, fight, every day, from one end of his district to the other; and in that first race for Congress Mr. Williams was left far behind by a straightforward, honest, old farmer. The professional politician did not succeed in annexing a job, while the farmer went to Congress for one term, and got disillusioned. This farmer representa-

tive soon found that he didn't know exactly what it was that the Farmer's Alliance wanted; and furthermore, that this nation would respectfully decline to enter the warehouse business, decline to issue receipts for cotton, and refuse to lend money on it at three per cent. The scheme sounded fine to his constituents at home, but wouldn't work out in Washington.

Two years thereafter Mississippi sweated through a still hotter campaign. The political thermometer bubbled and boiled and burst. Senator J. Z. George, the rugged "Old Commoner," as he was called, himself a dirt farmer, and Senator of great ability, was beaten in his home county by Sub-treasury clamor. Yet John Sharp Williams felt that the whole scheme was unsound, and he'd fight it.

All the noise, all the demagoguery, was arrayed against him when he opened his second campaign in a district where the farming element predominated by an immense majority. Nevertheless Williams again harnessed his horse and took the road.

After also-running in his first race for Congress, John Sharp Williams now rolled back his

sleeves to fight one of those hysterical outbursts that had raised up dictators and cast down kings. Substantial farmers, sane on other subjects, went raving mad, and shucked their coats at a hint that the Sub-treasury Plan was not of divine conception.

It took nerve—John being spare-built, weighing a hundred and twenty-five—to stand upon ramshackle platforms and gaze down into hostile faces, while he punched their gospel full of holes. But he did it. And finally got away with it.

From picnic to barbecue, from country church to schoolhouse, once more his horse went jogging along the roads, highway, trail and bridle-path. Hot work. The sun of August blistered him. Dust arose in his wake, like the tail of a comet, and settled upon his face, where sweat dissolved it into mud. Again he hitched beside every fence to yell at farmers plowing in their fields, and stop them to talk politics. Often they refused. Too busy. If Mr. Williams had only thought of it—and he foresaw most contingencies—he might have taken with him in the buggy a stout young negro plowhand. This pious ar-

rangement would permit the candidate and farmer to lounge under a shade-tree, discussing national affairs, while Mr. Negro turned over the farmer's steaming acres. Many voters are convinced by that argument.

But Mr. Williams didn't carry a negro. Folks might consider him aristocratic. True democracy demanded that he jerk the reins himself, and curry his own horse. Which saved a vacant seat in the buggy so he could give voters a lift and talk politics while they rode.

Again our candidate perched on the counter of every wayside store, munching cheese and crackers, while he laid his case before the people. Again he planned his arrival at the homes of influential citizens to synchronize with the ringing of their dinner-bell. At the farmer's table he got a bully chance to talk.

On the stump, first appearances seemed to be against him. He lacked the portly and majestic front, the catfish mouth and bull-bass voice of those who are foreordained to sway the populace. But he had something else, and to illustrate that quality, we mention Fitch:

"Fitch was a curyus sort of man,
Built on a kind of a skimpy plan;
Little, an' lean, an' holler-cheeked,
Eyed like a pigeon, and nosed like a hawk,
Ugly es sin, with a voice that skreaked,
Yit havin' *one* favor—Fitch could talk.

Let him start in, an' I don't keer how
Busy you might be at hoe or plow,
Plantin' or hayin', with clouds in the west,
An' frogs a hollerin' for rain kerflawk;
Let Fitch git a yarnin' an' all of us jest
Laid off whilse we listened—fer Fitch could talk."

Lord! Lord! how John Sharp Williams could talk, how he *did* talk, in that second campaign! Not a mere dribble-drabble of words, but sound horse-sense. He had ideas, honest ideas, and wasn't afraid to express them so plainly that anybody could understand. It is possible that his simplicity delayed his recognition as an orator. "Shucks!" a down-east farmer once passed judgment on Daniel Webster, "Dan'l ain't much of a orator, 'cause I understood every word he spoke."

Even at this late day, in some minds, the phrase "Southern Election" still conjures up a nightmare of hooded horsemen, of fire-eating

Kernels, of lariats and limbs and two-gun shooters. All that—what little there ever was of it—had long since passed away. Mr. Williams conducted a redhot campaign, but unlike those of ante-bellum dueling, or the bloodier affrays of Reconstruction. His cause could best be served by avoiding every suggestion of personalities, and appealing to a cooler-headed people. He was contending not so much against heretics as against heresy, while the very citizens who cherished it sat as judges of the debate. They must be won over, for men of their stamp can never be driven with a club.

Few public speakers could have accomplished what Williams did, by good humor, a smiling courage, sound logic, and by knowing the minds of those whom he addressed.

Men comprehended what the Yazoo candidate was driving at; and he drove so hard, hit the nail so squarely on its head, that voters were forced to believe what he said, and finally to believe in the candidate himself.

Rarely did Mr. Williams have his wrath aroused, and not by any force of opposition, but by some piece of pettiness, like this:

One day a country editor wrote him a letter, telling about the power and the influence of his newspaper. Some sheet! It handed down to electors their weekly opinions, and changed those opinions whenever the editor got ready. He carried every vote of the county tucked away in his vest pocket. That editor had the goods, and could deliver them. With this epistle, he enclosed a few clippings which gratuitously extolled the virtues and the genius and the statesmanship of John Sharp Williams. From a candidate's modest point of view, these clippings were so correct and sensible that Mr. Williams felt inclined to believe other statements made by that editor, until he reached the end of the letter. There, almost as a postscript, presumably an after-thought, the editor requested a small loan of fifty dollars, in order that he might keep his presses running, and cinch an election of the aforesaid statesman. To this Mr. Williams replied that a loan at such time might be regarded as improper; that he was not in that business, and made it an invariable rule never to lend money during a campaign.

After receiving this refusal of fifty dollars,

the editor immediately discovered that John Sharp Williams was no statesman at all, and spread his sad tidings among the voters. In every column of every issue he told the world that the said Williams was not competent to tie the shoestrings of his distinguished opponent. All of which would seem imprudent in an editor when John Sharp had the letters on him. And Mr. Williams used those documents with characteristic efficiency when he visited that county to present his claims, and sent the editor a polite invitation to be present at the speaking, because of certain remarks that Mr. Williams intended to make about him.

"Thanks," the editor returned his regrets. "This weather is too hot for me to sit and listen to *any*body talk."

"Better come," Mr. Williams insisted. "I'm going to make it a darn sight hotter."

After taking the precaution to have a friend stand guard for the purpose of pointing out where the editor might station himself, the candidate opened his speech. The editor did not show up, and Mr. Williams first expressed disconsolation at his absence, then read his letter

soliciting a loan of fifty dollars, together with numerous editorials which lauded Mr. Williams as a composite of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Robert E. Lee. They sounded like patent medicine testimonials—until the loan was refused. Then the editor changed his tune to what might have been a lambasting of the meanest man in the world, the sneak who pulls up young cotton. From these two opinions, before and after he didn't get the fifty, the audience drew its own conclusion.

"Now, fellow citizens," Mr. Williams said, "I appoint each man of you a committee of one to tell that editor exactly what I've said about him, and suggest that he'll have no trouble in finding me. After the speaking I shall sit on the hotel gallery, and wait for him to call."

This began to savor of ante-bellum elections, when punctilious and belligerent gentlemen called upon each other; and the coroner followed; and the flowers. But all the romance had vanished from our modern functions. The editor failed to call. He sold his paper and moved.

Picnics teach us more than books. During a close political contest they breed every trick of

the demagogue and hold-up artist. One of Mr. Williams' first and most illuminating experiences was at Gloomy Hole, on the least civilized frontier of Halifax County. Among the sovereign voters of Gloomy Hole it was predicted that Mr. Williams would not receive a solitary ballot. He was fighting the Sub-treasury Plan. The people were dead against him. His opponent had that precinct tied up in a sack. Maybe so.

The candidate who was supposed to have no chance had scarcely climbed out of his buggy when a woman approached him, a red-headed, hatchet-faced woman with her jaw set like a bear-trap. She was not a voter. That was before Mr. Edison had invented female suffrage. Yet anybody could take just one squint at that woman's countenance and be sure that she controlled votes. Nor did she beat around the bush in asking for what she wanted.

"Mr. Williams, I want you to make a contribution to buy our preacher a horse."

"Certainly, Madame, with pleasure." The candidate promptly shelled out ten dollars. Contribution No. 1.

In a few minutes, before he had taken his first drink of branch-water, another woman tackled him for money to help build a church.

"Certainly, Madame, with pleasure." Contribution No. 2. Ten dollars more—a form of blackmail not confined to Gloomy Hole.

At dinner-time the third woman came up, holding a plate of food in one hand and a subscription list in the other. Mr. Williams, being hungry, reached for the plate, but the woman wouldn't let him have it until she said, "Put your name down on this list for a donation to repair our church."

"But, Madame," the candidate explained, "I have already given ten dollars for that purpose."

"No sirree! Yo' name ain't on *my* list. This is a *different* church."

Contribution No. 3. That church also got ten dollars, and got it before the candidate for Congress got his dinner. Altogether the Gloomy Hole picnic cost Mr. Williams forty dollars.

At another picnic he met his populist opponent in joint debate, and afterward stood chat-

ting with him when a woman insisted that his opponent should give money to her church.

"But," Mr. Populite protested, "I'm a poor man, and have no money to give."

"All right," the woman sniffed. "If you can't give us any of your *money,* we can't give you any of our *votes.*"

This sized up the crude situation, and Mr. Williams failed to keep his mouth shut. He spoke to that lady, he spoke plainly; he informed her, with all the emphasis that courtesy permitted, exactly what he thought about extorting money from candidates, and deciding public issues upon the basis of cash contributed.

At that time a congressional nomination was not made by direct vote. The people cast their ballots in a primary election merely to determine which candidate would capture the delegates from a particular county to the District Convention. On the floor of the District Convention came the real struggle, the contest that counted, similar to our recent Democratic Dogfight in Madison Square. This national mêlée, however, proved to be mild and courteous and brief as compared with the District Convention that

assembled at Kosciusko in Attala County, Mississippi.

Among the delegations and avowed candidates came swarms of others who hoped to profit by a deadlock. Dark Horses displayed their headlights and their taillights where nobody could miss seeing them. Favorite Sons set up lightning-rods, then posed in perilous places, like Ajax defying the stroke. It was more bitter than the squabble in Madison Square, because these men knew one another, personally, and their contention assumed the rancor of a family fracas.

John Sharp Williams entered the Kosciusko Convention—as McAdoo entered Madison Square—with sufficient votes to put him well in the lead, but not enough to secure the nomination. He could veto but not annex. Thereupon a combination crystallized against him, "Anything to beat Williams." On that platform they tussled, and sweated, and swapped votes and rolled logs.

At every such convention the same thing generally happens. Delegates who cherish congressional aspirations of their own never want to nominate a strong man, a man who can make

good and hold his job. That probably was part of the Williams opposition, an alliance that preferred to set up a straw figure that they'd stand some chance of tearing down in the next campaign. But John Williams had already cut his eye-teeth, and was now busy cutting wisdom-teeth. Through innumerable ballots, his lines held firm. Name after name was sprung upon the convention, Dark Horses, Favorite Sons, Compromises, until the break came and Williams won, unanimously.

"Well, what do you think?" one delegate asked of a Receptive Person who had just taken down his lightning-rod.

"What do I think of it?" the Receptive Person snorted. "That cooks *everybody's* goose. You've got John Williams in there, for *life*. Never get him out, never."

But the man called "John" was not yet in. He had only been nominated by the Democrats, and still had the Populists to reckon with.

Two political campaigns from house to house, and a catch-as-catch-can practice of law, had developed John Sharp Williams into a remarkably effective stump speaker. Yet, during this sec-

ond canvas, the Populists raised such a clamor for their Sub-treasury scheme, that it seemed to threaten his defeat. Maybe, like frogs bellyaching in a pond, or flies skating on a bald head, their fuss and irritation caused certain Democrats to imagine that there must be overwhelming millions of them. Anyway, the Democratic State Executive Committee got frightened and rushed a reinforcement of veterans into his district to turn the tide. Among these pinch-hitters came the celebrated John M. Allen, "Private John" of Tupelo. Private John told stories, stories that applied, that captured the crowd and gained votes. In fact it was by a witticism that he had won his own election to Congress, and his first fame as a raconteur. This is the story:

Just after the Civil War, when audiences were largely composed of ex-Confederate soldiers, and a gallant record in gray was legal tender for their support, Private John found himself contesting with a general or two, and several colonels, for the Democratic nomination. Naturally his opponents pointed to their service under the Stars and Bars, from Bull Run to Appomattox, to their honorable and authentic records. Pri-

vate John couldn't butt his head against that; he had to skirmish around it. And so one day, in a speech that was repeated all over America, he said, "Fellow citizens, every man that used to be a general or a colonel, who rode a horse, and waved a sword through the late unpleasantness, *he* ought to vote for my distinguished opponents. But every one o' you that used to be a high private in the rear rank, who toted a twelve-pound musket, and marched all night on half rations, *he* ought to sympathize with me, and vote for 'Private' John Allen."

"*Private* John Allen!" Voters caught up the slogan and elected him.

Mr. Allen was the life-long crony of Mr. Williams, and made speeches for him throughout the doubtful district, where many of his anecdotes were so apt and successful that the candidate himself borrowed them. Be it likewise remembered that John Sharp Williams is no slouch at spinning a yarn; Private John's stories as told by John Sharp, with trimmings, raised a howl on every platform, and hilarious audiences were already laughing the Populist party out of court when the great barbecue at

Lauderdale came on. Thousands of people assembled, riding their mules for forty miles to hear the famous John Allen, wheel-horse of Democracy, and the advertised attraction. Never was Private John in fitter condition, telling his own best stories that Mr. Williams had only borrowed and re-told. He kept his hearers in a roar. One old farmer sat on the front seat, for a while, then rose up disgustedly and stalked out. "Ugh," he grunted, "that feller's got a national reputation for a joker. Huh! he can't do nothin' 'cept copy John Sharp's stories, an' don't tell 'em nigh as good as John."

Two years before, the man called "John" had known fewer than twenty-five people in his district, all lawyers, as he admitted, and therefore suspicious characters. Since then he had expanded his acquaintance and gained an influence that was never overthrown. His district that was supposed to be doubtful, even lost, elected him to Congress by a decisive majority. The victory was his own, a personal triumph. He won it by fearlessness, ability, honesty. Thousands of stubborn farmers whose opinions he attacked, came to admire the man who confronted

them like a game cock and told them in their teeth that they were wrong. More than that, he proved to them their errors, and actually got their votes. Both his campaigns were exhibitions of a rare political courage, for instead of shifting his sails to catch a popular wind, he steered straight against the storm, and defied it. From that day he has enjoyed a public confidence not confined to Mississippi. Time and again his people have seen the same spirit which impelled him as a child of eleven to investigate a proposition for himself, go to the very bottom of it, choose what seemed right, and pursue that course against all opposition. Like the great Lamar, John Sharp Williams became a real leader, rather than a servile follower of the crowd. People respected his opinions because they believed them sincere, and no demagogic claptrap to catch their votes. If there be a secret to his power, this was it.

Hon. John Sharp Williams entered public service as a Representative in the Fifty-third Congress, with the second Cleveland Administration, 1893. Only once between that time and his election to the Senate in 1911 did he have a

genuine contest. That seemed a case of political jugglery which occurred when the Mississippi Legislature rearranged our Congressional Districts. When the rearrangement was made, John Sharp Williams lived in Yazoo County, while the one-armed veteran, Honorable Charles E. Hooker, was a citizen of Hinds, and Honorable Patrick Henry a citizen of Warren. All three were sitting Members of the House, their counties being contiguous but not in the same district. By skillful manipulation all three of these Representatives were thrown into the same Congressional District; which meant that two would be elected to remain at home. And it meant something else. Perhaps there might have been a public need for this gerrymander; but the reason more commonly ascribed is that it removed two popular congressmen from the path of legislators who were ambitious to succeed them.

Anyhow, the arrangement sidetracked John Sharp Williams from his familiar hunting-grounds where he had made active friends, and set him down among strangers. Then it was that

the jovial "Jud" Russell of lamented memory sent his famous telegram:

"Hon. John Sharp Williams,
Yazoo City, Miss.
Move into Lauderdale County by wire. We'll elect you hands down.
Jud Russell."

Once before Mississippi had witnessed this same shift, when Hon. Otho R. Singleton found himself gerrymandered out of his stronghold, changed citizenship overnight to Scott County, and continued in Congress.

But John Sharp Williams refused to be moved out of Yazoo County by what he considered a political trick. Yazoo was his home. There his fire still burned upon the hearth of Grandfather Sharp; the friends of his young manhood lived in Yazoo; there lay Cedar Grove Plantation, and beneath those cedars was the grave of his father. No. He could not fight chicanery by chicanery, but manfully stood his ground; and from Yazoo launched a whirlwind campaign which made his seat in Congress secure. After this victory nobody cared to attack him.

At the beginning of his career Mr. Williams had announced himself as a "professional politician," using that term in the English significance, as one who devotes his life and fortune to public service. The example before him was that of L. Q. C. Lamar, John Marshall Stone, J. Z. George, Walthall the Superb, H. M. Street, W. A. Percy—gallant hearts and wise heads that guided their Mississippians aright, not mere adventurers who rose on the scum of opportunity, glittered for a day, and sank to just oblivion. The stalwart citizenry of Mississippi John Sharp Williams loved and honored. To be such a leader of such a people would brim the cup of his ambition.

No tongue can phrase his ideal better than he himself has done, in a wreath of immortelles laid upon the bier of a chieftain that is dead: upon a memorable occasion, from the floor of the House, he said:

"I know of but one instance in all history where a numerous and free people have emerged from a gigantic struggle, revolutionary in the enormity of the defeat of its cause, and the destruction of the political, social, and industrial

institutions which depended upon that cause, and have yet made for themselves no scapegoat, have rended no leader in person or in reputation, have proudly borne their own blame, if blame there were, conscious that no man or set of men could have led them anywhither if they had not wanted to go.

"This instance was furnished by the Southern people of the United States, upon and since their emergence from the battle wreck and social wreck of the war ending at Appomattox. Since that day they have, on every fitting occasion, and in every proper way, heaped honors upon the heads of those who led them, not to success and prosperity, as they hoped, but to such defeat, disaster, and gloom as would have meant despair to any other people.

"Few even of the Southern States can furnish instances of loyalty on the part of the people to their public men equal to that exhibited by the State of Mississippi throughout her history, wherever she has found men worthy of trust."

These were no idle words. They came straight from the heart of John Sharp Williams,

and voiced the highest motive of his life—in public or in private—to be worthy of trust. For thirty years his people so regarded him, and their confidence has followed him to the seclusion of his plantation home.

UNDER THE BIG DOME

At first they gave to John no heed
And deemed his clothes a joke;
Then folks began to sit up straight
And listen when he spoke.

V

"And thus he bore without abuse
The grand old name of gentleman,
Defamed by every charlatan
And soil'd with all ignoble use."

SOON after his first election to the Fifty-third Congress, for a term beginning March 4, 1893, visitors in the House Gallery began to observe a new member, wiry, alert, and quick-stepping, who attracted no admiration by his clothes. In fact, John Sharp Williams differed drably from a certain ancestor—another Williams—once a Senator from Tennessee. His old-time and far more dressy progenitor wore an elaborate coat with silver buttons, knee pants, ruffles, silken hosiery and buckled shoes—somewhat audacious raiment in which to seek the suffrage of coon-skin riflemen who had soldiered with Old Hickory. He seemed so brilliantly out of place among a backwoods constituency, that the heat of argument led his opponent on the stump to jest at Senator Williams' foppery.

"Fellow citizens," the Senator annihilated

him, "in this same garb I have appeared before kings when representing you as your Ambassador to the Royal Court of Spain. And surely I could not be less respectfully attired when standing before that greatest of all sovereigns, The American People."

Sartorially speaking, however, John Sharp Williams is an unashamed backslider from fashionable forbears. His clothes are commonplace. His personal appearance on the floor has been humorously described by comparing him with Uncle Joe Cannon, at whose lack of pulchritude Mr. Williams had dared to poke fun—for they became great friends. "Mr. Cannon," says the newspaper correspondent, "is as beautiful, in his order and style, as Mr. Williams. The Speaker has an old Egyptian or Assyrian hieratic look. Gravity, authority, pondering, are graven on that grandiose upper lip. The mouth is ample and firm. The eye is the true Speaker's orb, seeing what it will, closed when seeming open, yet capable of innumerable twinklings and companionable winks. . . ." Then the correspondent shifts to, "Mr. Williams, with his wild scalplocks and lovelocks flowing; with his blown,

disheveled, extemporaneous, neglected, surprised appearance; with his strange second-hand clothes of the mound-building period, his picturesque gaiters, his mysterious and melancholy eyes, and his general air of incognito. . . . Each is beautiful. Each should concede the other's loveliness. Mr. Williams is a good fellow, too, and deserves the loving-cup which he got."

Even this good fellow, however, had no friend to brag on him as the best-dressed man in the House. It was even hinted that the Gentleman from Mississippi bought coats and breeches ready made, off a shelf. But nobody supplied him with hand-me-down *opinions*. These were his own; and he had his own frank, fearless, vigorous method of expressing them. His first opportunity in the House came at a night session, the only time that a new member could secure. Not a dozen Representatives were in their seats: a most discouraging start. Of that speech a Northern correspondent said: "There was something in the speech and the man which challenged attention and commanded respect. Congress pricked up its ears, and before he had spoken a quarter of an hour it was the opinion

of Congress that this man would make his mark."

At the outset Mr. Williams spoke to empty chairs. Then the news spread that an extraordinary thing was happening. Men flocked in from their committee-rooms, from the cloak-room, from the restaurant below. Among these was Amos J. Cummings of New York, a contributor to the New York *Sun*. Next day the *Sun* carried two columns of comment on the ability, the soundness and the fluency of John Sharp Williams. That was the beginning of his national reputation.

More and more closely people began to listen when John Sharp Williams spoke, to quote his sayings and to repeat his stories. The atmosphere of the House exactly suited him. He delighted to mix in sudden emergencies that arose upon its floor, with flash of rapiers, with thrusts given and received. Quick thinking and prompt action stirred his blood, kept him vividly alive. Steadily his reputation grew as one of the very readiest and most resourceful debaters that had ever appeared in public life. Of course, some folks, chiefly on the Republican side, complained that he was disputatious, and hard to

get along with. Maybe so. Even his most apologetic friend cannot boast of John's propensity to turn the other cheek. Smiling and genial though he were, and fuller of amiable yarns than a fat pup is of fleas, yet he always kept a fight on tap for any hand that meddled with the faucet.

According to gossip, it became one of Washington City's favorite indoor sports to sic a new Republican Member on to John Sharp Williams, then get ringside seats and watch the feathers fly.

For instance: a fresh Congressman arrives from some radical district. He is nominally Republican, but conservative managers of the Old Guard fail utterly to handle him. His proclivities insist that he shall insurge. Discipline is required. That's where the party leader gets in a bit of Iago work by whispering, "If you want to become prominent *at once,* without waiting your turn under our fool system of seniority—if you itch to make a *quick* reputation, to step into the *very* front rank—jump on John Sharp Williams. Pulverize him. *Tousle* him. Don't leave a grease spot."

"Fine! I'll do it."

The new member chooses his own ground, selects his subject for debate, prepares himself, and lies in ambush for the opportunity. Then he jumps on John with both feet. He finds it easy enough to jump on, but the new member never seems able to locate a convenient landing-place where he can jump off again, with dignity. The keen-witted Mississippian rips him up the back, while old Republican warhorses sit chuckling in their chairs. After getting the hot end of it, the redhot end, that insurgent is apt to subside, to stand hitched, and to take orders. This may be a fable, for on sightseeing buses in Washington the Southern visitor gets stuffed full of facts which are not true.

Some way or other John Sharp Williams never seemed to be "making a speech"; certainly he never acted the part of a statesman delivering a masterpiece, never thrust his left hand into the breast of a Prince Albert coat while his right hand flourished the Declaration of Independence. Audiences frequently hear orators give mouth to sentiments of most exalted patriotism, which only makes them grin and whisper "Rot!"

For they comprehend that the orator is merely giving mouth to words with no heart in them, and that never touch the heart.

But when hearing John Sharp Williams the listener instinctively appreciates his earnestness, his direct method of telling what he feels, and making the hearer feel it. That may be art; it may be only his quality of sincerity that convinces.

More and more attentively the House began to hear him, the Nation began to hear him, oft-times caustic and severe, yet, agree or disagree, there could be no doubt of his truth and square intent.

And then, one day when the House was hushed, when solemn stillness smothered all their partisan contentions, they saw John on the floor, with face uplifted like some devotee worshiping at a shrine, while his clear voice uttered the confession of his manhood's faith:

"Every people, Mr. Speaker, in every age has had its ideal of true manliness. The ideal is the expression in popular thought of that which all, in their better moments, would like to be. One-tenth of mankind may mold themselves in

original casts—nine-tenths mold themselves by conscious or unconscious imitation of that which they love and revere as personified in others, either living or dead; this is the excusable sense in which men are and always will be hero-worshipers. He who is not in some highest sense a hero-worshiper is either a genius, of whom there are few, or a self-worshiper, of whom there are too many.

"The ideal of a people is, of course, reached by very few; it is reasonably approximated by many; it is striven for by nearly all, who are made better and nobler by the striving; it is rendered ridiculous in its overassertion or its unseasonable emphasis by some others; sometimes rendered hateful by those false at heart to what they outwardly assume.

"The ideal of the Italian is perfect art—the very word which formerly meant manliness in Italy now means art in Italian; the ideal of the French, military glory; of the English, unaffected honesty of deed and speech—its misunderstood consummation sometimes mere bluntness and boorishness. The ideal of the Southerner, before the war absolutely, and now pre-

dominantly, is that character which we express by the word "gentleman." The injunction of the father to the son was 'Be a gentleman.' The prayer of the mother was that her boy might 'first of all, be a gentleman.' If she held up in former times George Washington, in the latter times Robert E. Lee, as the first of Americans, and a fit pattern for the molding of all Americans, and therefore of her own children, it was primarily because each in his day was 'the first gentleman of his day.'

"The word must be understood, not in the English sense as a man of gentle blood, but in the Southern sense as a man of lionlike manliness in deed, of womanlike gentleness in manner; of charitable consideration for all, and of liberality in all things.

"The gentleman combined perfect and unfailing courtesy toward all women and all worthy men, with perfect and unfailing courage whether in private quarrel or in public strife.

"He might be rich or he might be poor—Southerners neither cared nor asked. Happier for himself if the former were his condition, but 'a gentleman still,' as the phrase went, what-

ever his financial condition, and therefore entitled to the unquestioning respect, confidence, and consideration of all men, and to the love and devotion of any good woman. He might be well born, or born of obscure parents. That question, unlike the other, might be asked, but the answer made no difference, if only the father were honest and not a coward, and the mother were pure.

"The ideal gentleman was always honest; spoke the truth; faced his enemy; fought him if necessary, never quarreled with him nor talked about him; rode well; shot well; used chaste and correct English; insulted no man—bore no insult from any; was studiously kind to his inferiors, especially to his slaves; cordially hospitable to his equals; courteous to his superiors, if he acknowledged any; he scorned a demagogue, but loved his people, and held it mean to prefer any class or individual interest, most of all his own, to that of the masses of his countrymen.

"He must be ready at any time, when needful, to lay down his life, not only for his own honor's sake, but, more promptly yet, for his

country's, his State's, or his community's sake, and that, too, regardless of the dictates of his own private judgment as to the wisdom or unwisdom of the quarrel. It was his duty to try to guide his people in what he considered the right path; but if he failed, it was mean and selfish not to follow them and, if need be, die with them. He was sometimes accused of being an aristocrat; but, if so, he belonged to that aristocracy which holds itself servant to the maxim *noblesse oblige.*

"In his private relations he was perfect in courtesy to all; he exacted perfect courtesy from all, to himself and to those dependent upon him.

"This was the ideal."

Although Mr. Williams was paying a tribute of love to the chivalric Walthall, who had passed away, his friends knew that he voiced his own ideals, and revealed the aspirations of his inner soul, fallen short of at times, but in a struggle for which he was "made better and nobler by the striving."

To be a gentleman, worthy of trust. Some forms of human pride become a spur to every laudable ambition, a curb to every meaner mo-

tive. The pride, the spur, the curb, John felt them all, and a condemnation of self when he knew that he had failed. It were well for the world if we had more gentlemen, too proud to lie, to cheat, to tarnish a father's name, to soil a woman, or to harm any man who may be weaker than himself.

This is the rarely attained standard which John Sharp Williams set up for himself, and the yardstick by which, with charity and the humor of his twinkling eyes, he measured other men.

Imitation gentlemen tickled him mightily—the wide-hatted person with a wide-mouthed sense of honor that infests cafés in Northern cities and noisily proclaims himself, "A Suth'n Gentleman, Suh." Everybody knows this caricature, everybody sees him, and Mr. Williams resented it that he sometimes brought an ideal into disrepute.

"I have heard," he says, "one of the most acutely intelligent, though not one of the broadest, men of this country, use the phrase 'Southern gentlemen' in debate, sneeringly. Had he enjoyed an intimate social acquaintance

with the type, he could no more have sneered when he used that phrase, than he could have sneered at the manhood whose holiest aspiration it aimed to express."

In this belittling way we frequently hear "Southern" coupled with "gentleman," when gentility is not a question of geography, nor of race, nor language, nor religion.

No man has greater reverence than Mr. Williams for the real, none a more wholesome contempt for the false and for the sham. How just were his judgments, how catholic his vision, may well be illustrated by a comparison that he once made of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. This son of a father killed in gray on Shiloh's bloody field was then at Hodgenville, Kentucky, accepting on behalf of the Nation a deed of gift to the Lincoln Birthplace Farm. He said:

"Abraham Lincoln was born in yonder little log cabin. . . . Within almost modern big-gun shot distance from where we now stand, Jefferson Davis was born.

"Both of these men were 'border State' men, Kentuckians; both of them came from pioneer

ancestry who had fought for American freedom, had braved the dangers and endured the isolation of the wilderness. It is a curious reflection, though there be not time to indulge in it here and now, as to how far each of these men's future—his political philosophy, the sectional patriotism of each, his leaning to nationality on the one side or State's Rights on the other—might have been altered, mayhap reversed, had Jefferson Davis's family moved him into Indiana and then into Illinois, and had Abraham Lincoln's family moved him first into Louisiana and then into Mississippi. However interesting that inquiry may be, the reverse occurred. Davis became a very extreme Southerner; Lincoln never became a very extreme Northerner. The men were very much unlike, and yet both were alike in possessing the cardinal human virtues—truthfulness, moral and intellectual honesty, courage, loyalty to ideals. There was, too, somewhat of inflexibility about both, though in one case the inflexibility, while knightly, was stern, logical, unyielding, unhumorous and even proud; while in the other case it was modified by humility and a rich

sense of humor, from which flowed that wonderful capacity for 'making allowances,' that broad knowledge of an opposite's way of looking at things, that sympathetic appreciation of the moods and ways of thinking, and the ways of feeling, of the untaught and unenriched masses of mankind.

"With Davis there were no laughter-inciting 'sidelights on himself and others and their relations to one another' to relieve even temporarily the tension of a fixed and absorbing purpose. Lincoln was never without them. By being never without them he made lesser men, like Stanton, for example, 'very impatient.'

"Davis became the very type of the best plantation life of the extreme South. As a part and parcel of that life he consecrated himself to his section, whose very civilization and social order he thought to be menaced. Lincoln consecrated himself to the Nation. Both endured nobly to the very end, each steadfastly 'keeping the faith.'

"Lincoln remained all his life a borderer. In his temperament he came very much nearer that of the Southerner than that of the New

Englander, or the New Yorker, or Pennsylvanian. No theory of any sort would ever have led him into that gross violation of common sense and common justice which, after the war, brought about the grotesque though cruel saturnalia of the Southern reconstruction governments; nor could any theory or any war experience, however bitter, have brought him to a hatred for the Southern white people, even of the slave-holding class. He lived with none. He died without any.

"He was a great nationalist, not only in political vision but in this, that he knew and loved the people of both sections. He was perhaps the most thoroughly nationalistic and the least sectionalistic of all our presidents, not even excepting George Washington, who never forgot that he was 'a Virginian and a Gentleman.'

"It may be sadly recorded that while Lincoln understood the men of both sections, it is doubtful if any large percentage of those of either ever understood him until long after he was dead. Jefferson Davis understood him partially; understood fully his utter lack of malice. Witness the superb reply of the chief of the

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C. K. BERRYMAN'S CARTOON OF LEADERS "UNCLE JOE" CANNON AND JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS

fallen Confederacy when, his attention having been called to President Johnson's proclamation containing the insinuation that he (Davis) was complicité to the assassination of Mr. Lincoln, he replied, 'There is one man in the United States, at any rate, who knows that to be a falsehood. He knows that I would infinitely rather have Lincoln than to have Johnson in the White House.' Davis afterward said: 'Next to the loss of the Cause itself, the death of Mr. Lincoln was the greatest calamity that ever befell the South.' "

Turning from gentler and sweeter things which Mr. Williams always preferred, another section of his code demanded that he must face the enemy to fight if need be. And toward the end of a long service in the House, while leader of the militant minority, busier than a switch-engine, he found ample opportunity for combat, not only with Republicans, but in family squabbles among the Democrats. His position made him responsible for committee assignments, over which at times a tense rivalry developed. These situations he handled with tact, maintaining the cohesion of his party and the

respect due to himself. Though the simplest man alive, and no stickler, Mr. Williams would never submit to be arrogantly overridden.

One day a page-boy hurried into his office, breathless. "Mr. Williams, sorr; the Big Chief is at the Raleigh Hotel, sorr, and says he'll be glad to confer with you."

"Big Chief? Who's he?"

"Mr. Murphy, sorr," in an awesome whisper.

"Oh! Tammany?"

"Yes, sorr. Sends word that he wants to confer with you—at the Raleigh."

"Very good," Mr. Williams answered undismayed. "Tell Mr. Murphy that I am usually in my committee-room from nine o'clock A.M. until the House convenes at noon, where I shall be pleased to confer with any Democrat who may call."

The mountain refused to go to Mahomet, so Mahomet must come to the mountain.

Out of this incident grew another: Mr. Williams had drawn upon himself the antagonism of some very influential newspapers. There was a certain young reporter at Washington who, from natural causes incident to a Press Gallery,

had gone down and out. He got into trouble. He lost his job, had no money, couldn't sober up, and the police were trying to nab him. His star seemed in total eclipse; but John Sharp Williams was his friend, and stuck by him.

Years afterward the reporter came back, came back strong, in a highly paid position representing the group of newspapers that were opposing Mr. Williams. Having climbed again to the top, he naturally wanted to stay there. This was his rejuvenated condition when he came to Mr. Williams and said, "I'm going to lose my job."

"What's the trouble, Bill? I thought you were making good?"

"I am. But they've ordered me to write you down."

To "write down" a public man means to belittle him, to throw bricks and mud, to dig up scandal, to ruin his reputation, to destroy him.

"All right, Bill," said Mr. Williams, "go to it."

"No, sirree. I won't. Just *won't.*"

"See here, boy." The Democratic leader laid an affectionate hand upon Bill's shoulder.

"Don't be a fool. That job's your bread and meat. If *you* don't write me down, some other correspondent will. I can give you plenty of dope on myself. I'll tell you what to say. We'll have a lot of fun. Nothing that your papers may print can possibly hurt me. They can only say one thing, that I sometimes take too many toddies. The people of Mississippi already know that, and forgive it. Go ahead. Do your worst."

No amount of insistence, no argument, could induce that boy to "write him down." Instead Bill quit his job, and left Washington.

Being true himself, John Sharp Williams won and held the loyalty of other men. No bars of class or wealth or position fenced them apart. His friends are found among all kinds of people: the bluecoat at the street-corner, tyrannizing over traffic, the Irishman sitting as keeper at a Senate doorway, the man mixing toddies behind a bar, the diplomat representing our Government at the Court of St. James, or the President directing the destinies of our nation. Which, cuts no social ice with Mr. Williams. Degrees of rank do not count; but,

depend upon it, there must be some personal quality in each man that makes him naturally a friend of John's.

Intellect is no magnet for the attraction of friendship or of love. Amiable human weaknesses may prove stronger than any strength. For whatever reason, Mr. Williams made friends in Washington, not only for himself but for his people. Once there came to the national capital a man of ability who lived to hate the South. Yet Mr. Williams liked him, and resolved to remove the prejudice. He did it in this way:

Walthall was dead, the Senator from Mississippi. Like Nicanor, the ex-Confederate chieftain lay dead in his harness, with a funeral-train waiting to bear him southward. And John Sharp Williams arranged that the gentleman who so hated all that had upheld secession, was appointed on the committee to accompany Walthall's remains.

By request of the family, the usual Government flowers were omitted. But as the General's funeral-car drew nearer home, at every Mississippi station where the train stopped, peo-

ple came aboard, bringing the blossoms of sorrow to lay upon his bier. The humble came, and the great, the white and the black. Negroes brought bouquets of wild flowers, gathered in fence corners, and with tears deposited them at the feet of him whom they had loved.

At Grenada, Senator Walthall's home, assembled the foremost men of Mississippi, men who would have been leaders in any land where they might live. And the Northerner, who thought he hated the South, said to Mr. Williams, "Those men look as though they were born to command."

"They were," Mr. Williams answered very simply.

On their return journey the two talked long together, the Southerner and the South-hater who was a South-hater no more. He had come in human touch with those he'd never known, and changed his mind. Just as Mr. Williams himself had met dozens of men beyond the Potomac whom he grew to love.

Naturally enough, Mr. Williams and President Roosevelt were friends. Differ? Of course they did, but Roosevelt learned much

from men who did not agree with him. At that period the President was appointing many negroes to office in the south, some of which were most objectionable. Already we have seen how Mr. Williams was liable to speak out in meeting. Now the spirit moved him, and he told the Rough Rider that if he really wanted to do something for the advancement of the negro, he was taking the wrong tack. "I *know* the negro," said Mr. Williams. "I come from generations of slaveholders who have never been negro-haters or negro-baiters. I also know the Southern demagogue. By putting negroes into office you are furnishing campaign material for that demagogue, which does unmeasured harm to the black man, and to racial relationships in the South."

As a consequence, John and Teddy had a merry scrap.

In this connection, it may be news to many Mississipians that John Sharp Williams actually helped James K. Vardaman to become Governor of Mississippi, about the same time that Cole Blease was elected in South Carolina. It might have been in the mind of Mr. Williams that

a rise to power of men who, whether justly so or not, were regarded as implacable enemies of the negro race, would prove to Roosevelt what must happen throughout the South if exasperation were aroused by placing negroes in office over white men, and especially over white women.

While these Southern manifestations were still recent, still itching, Williams again called upon the President and pointed out results. At which Roosevelt blew up. He said things, plenty of things, explosively, indignantly, and pounded his fist on the table.

"Fine!" Senator Williams smiled. "Get it out of your system. Make the air sulphurous around me. I don't mind. I rather like it. I'm just showing you what has happened, and will continue to happen if you persist in appointing negroes to Southern offices."

Any tactful person would have considered that a most unpropitious crisis to solicit a loan, or to ask a favor. Yet, while Teddy's eyes were blazing and his nostrils snorting fire, Senator Williams chose that wrathful moment to say:

"Now, Mr. President, I want to ask some-

thing at your hands, and realize that you are prepared to say 'no.'"

"Say no?" Like the crack of a rifle Roosevelt snapped his answer, "I don't propose that you shall trap me in any such fashion. What do you want?"

"Mr. President, I'm not setting a trap. I want you to appoint a certain young Democrat to a certain office. You have no white Republican fit for the position, and by appointing a negro you'll be furnishing additional campaign thunder to the negro-hater."

"I will, eh?"

Then they went to the mat again, the Cowboy President and the duellist from Heidelberg, telling each other what they thought. When the smoke rolled away, the young Democratic friend of Senator Williams got his appointment, while John remained good friends with Teddy.

Immediately after this heart-to-heart collision in the White House, a rumor went creeping around Washington that the impulsive Roosevelt felt such confidence in Senator Williams

that he desired him to referee all Federal appointments thereafter made in Mississippi.

Mr. Roosevelt had no illusions concerning the difficulties and abuses of this referee system by which appointees to public office were selected. But the President had to trust somebody, and knew that recommendations were not always made for wholly patriotic motives. However, he couldn't help himself. And this was the job that he tried to shove off on Senator Williams.

"No, Mr. President," John smilingly declined. "You are the Republican President; I am a Democratic Senator. This arrangement would place us both in a false position. We couldn't get away with it, Mr. President, couldn't get away with it."

IN THE SOLEMN SENATE

Through days of stress and nights of pain,
His honest thought and simple words
Made his positions plain.

VI

Then came a War; and with the War
There came a Test of all the Nation's men.

"In December, 1903, John Sharp Williams was chosen leader of the minority in Congress, succeeding to the place formerly held by Richardson, Bailey, Crisp, Mills, Carlisle and Morrison. Since the first convocation of the Fifty-third Congress, the Democratic side has been a mob. Crisp did not live long enough to show how hopeless his leadership would prove; but Bailey, an abler man, failed lamentably, simply for the reason that one having all the combined genius of Henry Clay, Thad Stevens, and Tom Reed could not have led that squad. Richardson tried urbanity that failed as completely as Bailey's arrogance. Then came John Sharp Williams in the leadership; and he did admirably, all things considered, for he had more envy snarling at his heels than even plagued Bailey. His biggest sin was his resolution to make the party Democratic. . . . No doubt he

has made mistakes, but he is the ablest man in the House, and the best debater on Capitol Hill."

This was not written by an overenthusiastic admirer in Yazoo, but by a trained and critical correspondent at Washington. Those correspondents know men. Before the new member checks his gripsack at a local hotel, the Press Gallery comes pretty near to having him filed in his proper pigeonhole. As viewed by the seasoned correspondents, John Sharp Williams was reckoned "the ablest man in the House, and the best debater on Capitol Hill."

For these reasons the folks back home in Mississippi, a few persons, perhaps not many, felt dubious when their good friend John announced his candidacy for the United States Senate. Some of his staunchest partisans wondered if he were taking a misstep, not only for himself but for his State. In the House of Representatives he now held a commanding position as party leader; and Democratic success at the next elections would make him Speaker, an office of importance second only to the Presidency. Upon this account his most ambitious

supporters might have preferred to keep him where he was, rather than sacrifice the advantage he had gained.

His work in the House was eminently suited to both John Sharp's talents as a debater and his skill as a tactician. There he had become strongly entrenched, at ease, and effective. Friends feared that by shifting him from such a niche of influence and usefulness, the new Senator might find himself more or less submerged in the ponderous routine of the Senate.

The event, however, failed to justify their fears. When Congressman Williams in 1909 moved from the south wing of the Capitol to the north, the prestige of his ability followed him. He stepped at once into a situation, not of such acknowledged leadership as he had forsaken—senatorial tradition forbade that to any novice—but became a Senator whose counsels were sought and whose opinions were respected. In spite of which he never grew to like the Senate procedure, and always looked back longingly upon those joyous mêlées in the House. An incident:

Senator Root was delivering an address which

Democrats thought should be answered with a sledgehammer, and at once. So they routed Senator Williams out of his cozy corner in the cloak-room and said:

"John"—by this time many of them were calling him "John"— "John, you must go in there and reply to Root."

"What's Root saying?" Williams inquired.

"Saying a plenty. Listen to him. Then take the floor, *and hold* it."

"All right."

Ever since that first proud day when young John Williams began to practise law before a Yazoo County Squire, he had reveled in sporadic scrimmages. To prepare a set oration, to memorize and spout, was not his forte. He preferred to take the words, the reasoning, the logic from an adversary's lips, then demolish him with stronger reasons and clearer logic of his own. So he sat there in the Senate Chamber, hand cupped to his ear, applying every faculty of attention, his mind busy with arguments to controvert the able Senator from New York. Democrats and Republicans flocked in to their seats, and waited for the fireworks when Wil-

liams answered Root. They expected something spectacular, for the Mississippian seemed to be all keyed up, intense and eager to rise as Senator Root sat down.

The famous New Yorker had finished. All eyes turned to Mississippi—when the gavel fell, and the Vice-president announced:

"The hour of two is arrived, at which time the Senator from California has given notice that he will address the Senate."

That notice most effectually muzzled the Southerner, left him stewing and sizzling with bottled-up debate. He couldn't get the floor, while the Senator from California most serenely proceeded with a three-day speech on Christian Science, which had no earthly or heavenly connection with the subject under discussion by Senator Root.

"But you'll reply to Root a little later?" the Democrats insisted.

"No," John Sharp shook his irritated head. "Our chance is gone. He should have been answered before the same audience, and on the spur of the moment."

As a Senator Mr. Williams always resented

the Vice-president's keeping of what he dubbed "the Holy List"—a memorandum of names to be called in due order, whereupon the designated Senator might talk upon whatever subject he chose. Under that rule no real debate was possible, for no conclusion was ever reached; the floor could be pre-empted in advance, and totally irrelevant matter substituted. It seemed to Mr. Williams that one bone should be picked before another was taken up.

The outstanding upstanding quality that has distinguished John Sharp Williams in public life is his propensity to speak the truth, and stick to it with unflickering courage.

Truth-telling, more praised than practised, is a commendable virtue; but too much of it, at the wrong crisis, may become the height of recklessness. No politician likes to blurt out a bunch of volunteer facts merely because they are true, when he might just as easily keep his mouth shut. A shut mouth catches no flies. A craven tongue Mr. Williams has never carried, though at times it jeopardized his own popularity to speak so frankly. Again and again he has demmonstrated a rare political courage by taking

sides, against what seemed to be a torrent of popular clamor.

Years ago, when Senator J. Z. George was a candidate to succeed himself, a storm of radicalism demanded his retirement. At the opening of that campaign, Williams wrote the Senator not to claim Yazoo County; that it would probably vote against him by a majority of five hundred; but that he and other friends were hard at work.

Remember that the Congressional Bee was then already buzzing around John Sharp's bonnet. And that particular Bee is more powerful than conscience to make cowards of us all. Mr. Williams cherished certain personal ambitions, which, if they were ever to blossom and bear fruit, depended upon his being able to command a practically solid vote in his own county. Every office seeker must conciliate the home folks. But John Sharp didn't, certainly not by following the line of least resistance and drifting with the strongest current. Senator George's opponent had a large family connection in Yazoo, influential, popular and highly respected gentlemen. They were a dominating

force; yet they were the very men, his best friends and neighbors, whom John Sharp must first of all antagonize by supporting George. Against what seemed a crushing weight of numbers, Williams threw himself into the fight, and after a few weeks again wrote to George that the adverse majority would not be so great; then finally advised him that, "We are going to carry Yazoo County for you." Which they did.

Not always did courage win, but sometimes suffered a temporary backset; as happened a generation later when Hon. Leroy Percy sat in the United States Senate as colleague of the same John Sharp Williams. A notable pair. Well-informed correspondents at the capital have often told this writer that during their incumbency no State in the Union was more ably represented than Mississippi.

Mr. Percy had been chosen by the legislature, after a prolonged deadlock and most acrimonious fight, to fill out the unexpired term of Senator McLaurin. In due course Senator Percy became a candidate before the people for the full term, which revived all the animosities of

the legislative caucus. So bitter did this feeling become, that kinsmen of John Sharp Williams wrote and implored him to keep out of it, that Percy would surely be defeated, and insisting that Mr. Williams must not undermine his own position.

That is orthodox logic. The Williams seat was secure. There was no necessity for him to intervene. He might well have remained neutral, and watched the others scramble. But he immediately wrote home that he had never deserted a friend, especially a friend in danger. So instead of standing aside, Senator Williams hurried back to Mississippi, made speeches for Percy, and to some extent shared a loss of prestige by his defeat.

When this nation became involved in the World War, Mr. Williams had been for six years a Senator, his patriotism, inflexible integrity and ability recognized alike by his colleagues and the country. His party occupied the White House. President Wilson was known to be his friend, and John Sharp Williams himself had become a powerful figure. As a Senator he stood sturdily beside the President; as

a man and a fighter he sent three sons to the front for shock service, not in swivel-chair jobs of the embusque. His fourth son remained on the plantation, producing cotton and food-stuffs.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and an assiduous student of international affairs, the Senator from Mississippi made himself felt. He knew Germany, understood its aims and ideals, had lived beneath the sinister shadow of its Junker system, and this gave additional weight to his insistence that the first aggression of the Kaiser should be resisted. This steadfast belief set him at variance with President Wilson, and he sometimes showed impatience over what he regarded as a policy of delay.

But the evil had not yet grown sufficiently intolerable; as was the case, long before the English Revolution, when somebody inquired of Oliver Cromwell what he thought about conditions. "Well," the wise Old Noll replied, "things will have to *get much worse, before they get any better.*"

Which is humanly true, and applies to our

American state of mind before we joined the Allies. A peace-loving people, averse to conflict, will bear and bear until a last straw breaks their back. Then, and not until then, will our republic go whole-heartedly into war.

Even after the sinking of the *Lusitania,* President Wilson still thought, and Senator Williams finally came to agree with him, that this nation had not yet reached such a point of outrage as would cause each fighting man to feel that it was his personal quarrel . That point came later. Then these United States aroused themselves.

April 4, 1917. A staggering world paused breathless to fix its eyes upon Washington City. China was questioning Japan, Germany was whispering to Austria; from every part of the British Empire, from France bled white, from ravished Belgium, and from millions of jaded soldiers along the battle-front came their anxious question, "What will the great republic do?" And the Senator from Mississippi answered them.

"We are going into this war for all we are worth, for all our capital is worth, for all our

bodies are worth; for all that we have and all that we are. And I for one now hope that we will never make peace until the universal decree of the civilized world has gone forth that Hapsburgers and Hohenzollerns have ceased to reign."

Here was a direct answer, with no diplomatic rigmarole and no strings tied to it. That answer was made in the highest deliberative body on earth, upon the most momentous crisis that ever confronted mankind. The Senate galleries were packed; excited crowds surged along the corridors; every street swarmed with people eager to know the decision. In the Senate Chamber, President Wilson's message, asking for the declaration that a state of war existed, was then being debated.

The Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. LaFollette, held the floor, reading for hours from his manuscript. Then John Sharp Williams leaped erect.

"Mr. President," he said. "We have waited and have heard a speech which would have better become Herr Bethmann-Hollweg of the German Parliament. In fact he has gone much

further than Herr Bethmann-Hollweg (in the Reichstag) ever dared to go.

"I heard from him a speech which was pro-German, pretty nearly pro-Goth, and pro-Vandal; which was anti-American President, and anti-American Congress, and anti-American people.

"I have loved the Senator from Wisconsin, in a way, until recently; but I have no sort of patience with any American who stands up in the American Senate and spends three or four hours in plaudits of the common enemy, who happens right now to be not only our enemy but the enemy of the human race, while he has not one word to say in praise of an American President, or an American Congress, or the American people.

"I might have begun this speech by paraphrasing the utterances of old Patrick Henry: 'Gentlemen, you speak of peace, but there is no peace.'

"Here we stand—in war, not in peace. The Kaiser, not we, has settled that question.

"There is no peace except that analogous to a man whom another man kicks, and who fails

to notice the kick because the part kicked is paralyzed. If the American people cannot be aroused to righteous indignation now, and to a degree of patriotic fervor and passion, they are degenerate sons of noble sires who fought the War of the Revolution, and who fought the Civil War on both sides.

"Tell me that the American Congress is 'about to involve the American people in war'! The man who says that is a knave or a fool. He is a knave if he knows better and says it anyhow; and he is a fool if he does not know better. We are involved in war, not by the American Congress, but by orders of the German Kaiser, and by the German Kaiser's military and naval advisers.

"Tell me that I have got to be kicked twice, and then kicked the third time, and then notified that I am going to be kicked the fourth time in order to constitute a state of hostility between me and the man who proposes the fourth kicking!

"The war is here, and Congress has not brought it on, and the President has not brought it on, and the American people have not brought

it on. The Junkerthum and the Kaiserthum of Germany have brought it on, in contempt for you and me.

"There are two things about this situation that I face. One is the necessity of it. I face that necessity because I must. The other is the opportunity of it, and I face that because I will. I am glad that American citizenry shall have the opportunity of fighting on the side of liberty and democracy and free speech and free institutions against Prussian militarism and autocracy.

"I join the President in having no hostility to the German people. I spent two and a half years of my life with them. The man who inhabits the borders of the Rhine, the man who inhabits Bavaria and Wurttemberg, easily moved to tears and easily moved to laughter and easily moved to rage, is a man whom I have learned to love. And I have always believed that this war in Europe is not the fault of the German people.

"The Senator from Wisconsin spent a lot of time talking about violations of the rights of neutrality by Great Britain. Great Britain has

murdered none of our citizens. Great Britain has drowned none of our women and children. Great Britain has seized our merchandise and carried it into port, and had its court to sit upon it, to adjudicate whether or not it was subject to confiscation. She has gone further than any nation ever went before, because when she seized our cotton and our wheat to keep them from going to the enemy, and pronounced them contraband, she has paid for them at the market price.

"Then the gentleman undertakes to 'twist the British lion's tail.' We have many a demagogue that habitually does that. It started soon after the Revolution, but not with those of us whose forefathers fought under George Washington in the Continental line to establish American independence.

"Which would you rather do—fight Germany now, with France and England and Russia to help you, or fight her later, when she is ready, by ourselves? You have got to do one or the other.

"I tell you, moreover, that if Germany does win that fight upon the Continent of Europe,

with Belgium already a vassal State, Holland to become one, France by defeat one; with all those forts and naval stations and shipyards open as well as her own, she will begin to get ready to whip us, unless England's fleet prevents it.

"Now, Great Britain can, by sea power, defend herself almost indefinitely, defend herself long enough for us to get ready to help her to defend us. You can put it in your pipe and smoke it, the fact that you must choose whether you are going to fight Germany *now,* with assistance, or whether you are going to fight her later. You have got to fight her.

"He made a long, labored criticism of the President of the United States, who is just as much your President right now as he is mine, although I helped to elect him and you did not.

"The Senator from Wisconsin says that with the European War carried on over there 'we have nothing to lose.' Have we not? Have we no honor that we might lose? Have we no regard for the sovereignty of the American Nation that we might be compelled to dispense with? Have we no regard for the flag floating from the flagstaff of our ships that were sunk

without warning upon the high seas? Is sentiment rot? Is patriotism rot? Is there nothing that a man has which he either possesses, or which possesses him, that is precious to him except money and material advantage?

"By the way, I am getting tired of another thing. This does not come from the Senator from Wisconsin; it comes from some other Senator who spoke. I am getting very tired of somebody saying that this is a *Wall Street War*. It is a lie.

"Another Senator has said something about 'putting the dollar-mark upon the flag.' That struck me as peculiar. I am the son of a father whose mother said to him, 'Kit, you are a Whig; you are opposed to secession; let the Yankees and secessionists fight this war?' And his reply was, 'Mother, the time has passed for a gentleman to determine whether he will fight or not. The only question is, which side shall he fight on? I cannot help to kill Anne's kinsfolk.' Anne was my mother.

"Somebody said to me the other day, 'You seem to be angry, and in a passion about this German question'; and I said, 'I am.' Next to

the indignation of God, is the righteous indignation of a true man with a soul in him and red blood, instead of bluish milk, in his veins, against the German assumption of German superiority, and against German arrogance and injury and insult. But, above all, insult. The thing I believe that I resent most is what Germany said to us about painting our ships like the display window of a barber-shop, when we could go, by her allowance, *once* a week into *one* port in *one* country. I resent that more than I resent even the sinking of our ships and the drowning of our citizens.

"The Senator from Wisconsin referred to 'this European war' which we are about to enter. We are not about to enter any European war; we are about to enter an *American* war, which has been forced upon America by German military authority.

"There are some things worse than war, and there are some things worse than death; one of them is to live forever coupled with your other self, while your other self tells you that you are a pusillanimous, degenerate coward. It is worse than death to have self-contempt.

"Now, Mr. President, I suppose this debate is pretty nearly closed. I fancy it is from the fact that the Senator from Wisconsin has already spoken." (Laughter.) "As a rule the Senator from Wisconsin does not speak until the curtain is about to fall upon the drama and until he can pose as the last, if not the chief, actor in the scene."

Only a few extracts from this speech are given, just enough to show how the fiery indignation burst from John Sharp's heart. Here was no rhetorical oration, mulled over and polished in the quiet of a study, and cunningly contrived for dramatic effect, but the plain words of a plain American appealing to American manhood. And the appeal went home. It brought him thousands of telegrams and letters, for he touched the heart of America, as these sentiments must continue to touch it, so long as America has a heart.

In all he said and did the practical commonsense of Mr. Williams was made manifest, and couched in language so simple, like the sense itself, that everybody understood. Speaking once on the question of Colonel Roosevelt

being given a command in France, Mr. Williams voiced what the average American thought. After expressing his great respect and affection for the ex-President, which was true, he said:

"Mr. President, I agree with the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. Lodge) that the American flag ought to be upon the firing-line of France or Belgium right now. The quickest way to get it there is to send 10,000 Regulars, under the command of competent officers.

"So far as ex-President Roosevelt is concerned, I think it would be very well for him to go to France in command of a regiment. It would be a great sentimental acquisition to the cause of the Allies, and against the common enemy, to have it known not only that the American flag was upon the firing-line, but that an ex-President of the United States was also there.

"That would be a thing which must travel far upon the wings of daily news.

"I have sometimes doubted the military capacity of Mr. Roosevelt to command a brigade, and I know that he is by no means fitted to command a division.

"It is not Col. Roosevelt's fault any more than

it is the fault of the Senator from Massachusetts, or my fault, that he and I are not fitted to command a division."

MR. LODGE: "Mr. President, if the Senator from Mississippi will allow me a moment, I desire to say that Col. Roosevelt did not ask to command a division, or even expect to do so; that he disclaimed it; that he did not want it; but that he was prepared to go in a subordinate position."

MR. WILLIAMS: "Mr. President, there is no objection to Col. Roosevelt doing that, any more than there is an objection to the Senator from Ohio, or the Senator from Massachusetts doing it. But if either one of them desires to volunteer to *command* instead of volunteering to *obey,* and wants to volunteer for the very high position of division commander, much as I love them both, I would say that neither one of them is fit for it." (Laughter.)

THE UPSTANDING AMERICAN

A dreamer, visionary too,
He may seem that to some of you;
Yet in these useless wars he saw
Just murder, under mask of law.

VII

God grant it may be true of me,
Whate'er my kith and clan,
That whether King or Clown I be,
At least I be a Man.

BE it always remembered, be it never forgotten, that John Sharp Williams hailed from the most American part of America, where in the veins of kinsmen, friends and neighbors there flowed the purest Anglo-Saxon blood, almost wholly undiluted by foreign admixtures, and utterly untainted by foreignisms. He himself is an American, merely an American.

In measuring his accomplishments as Congressman and Senator, one must think backward to eleven-year-old Johnny seeking the truth of religion; to the inexperienced candidate arguing with old Mr. Yarber about a stock law for Beat Three in Yazoo County, or listening to Squire Meekins' discourse on the peculiarities of the people. In order to understand John Sharp, we must know the road that he has traveled. And recall his adventures along the way.

Then take his simple utterances:

"It may be narrow, but I love my plantation better than any other plantation, my county better than any other county, my State better than any other State in the Union, and my country better than any other country in the world, and my race—the English-speaking race—better than any other race."

"Those of you who are in subjection to German thought or German power, philosophically or financially, or otherwise, may take your stand wherever you please, but I take my stand in behalf of the American people and in behalf of the rights of the American people upon the high-seas."

"I have some boys. All of us have some boys. There is no heroics in it. There is no emotionalism about it. When a boy goes out, there is no use in getting up with tears in your eyes and talking about it. If a boy is true to his ancestry, he is going anyhow. Do not urge him to go, any more than you would urge him to stay at home. If he has the right blood in

him he is going, and he can do very much more effective service when he is 20 years old than he can do when he is 31 or 35 or older."

"I am tired of hearing of the 'inefficiency' of the American Government and of the American people. I tell the Senator from Massachusetts right now, that it is the most efficient Government, the most efficient business, and the most efficient people upon the surface of this globe, Germans not excepted, and we have proved it."

"The Senator asks me what definite plans we have made. 'What definite plans that cannot be revised,' to use his language. Why, thank God, we are not asses enough to make any definite plans now that cannot be revised in the future, if they ought to be revised; and if we have any sense we know they will have to be revised. Why, even when we formed the Constitution of this country, we left ourselves free to revise it."

As an American, Senator Williams urged

what he considered to be a fair system of distributing equally the burdens and dangers of the war, by the selective draft. In a speech supporting it he said:

"We have in America about a million traitors. Among them are a considerable number of German, Austrian, and Hungarian spies. I want by this measure to weed out men of that sort. So far as a man is a naturalized American citizen, I want to invite him to resist this draft. If he does not resist it, we will enlist him. If he does resist, we will watch him; and if he does anything wrong while he's being watched, we will interne him. So we shall separate the true from the false, separate the loyal from the disloyal, separate the American from the traitors. And we will prove that this is a *people* instead of being, as has been charged, an accidental conglomeration of many peoples. That is one reason why I want the selective-draft, to spot traitors.

"Now, Mr. President, I want it for another reason: I want to resort in America, as an emergency measure, to compulsory universal service, with the hope that at the end of this war,

when we have waged it successfully, we may be able, as a part of the treaty of peace, not only to put an end to compulsory military service for all time to come in America, but to force Germany and Austria and Turkey, and the balance of the world to put an end to it all over the world.

"I want to put an end to the mad, idiotic, insane spectacle that has faced the world for forty-odd years, of nation after nation gathering all of its manhood in armed camps, watching and suspecting and fearing other nations whose populations are also gathered in armed camps.

"I am in favor of this war, and I am for carrying it to the end, no matter what it costs, for another reason—with the hope that at the end of this war we may put an end to most wars; that we may agree upon some sort of league among civilized nations whereby it will be said by those having the power and the force behind them to execute their sayings, 'Hereafter whenever any civilized nation in this world shall dare to make war upon any other civilized nation without first submitting the question in controversy to arbitration, or pro-

posing to do so, that nation shall be declared an outlaw, beyond the pale of international law and beyond the pale of civilization; its overseas commerce shall be stopped; it shall be strangled and choked until it voluntarily comes back by due repentance, and after due punishment, into the pale of civilization.' It sounds like a paradox, but I am in favor of war in order to put an end, so far as is possible, human weaknesses being considered, to war itself. My dream, as a fanatic peace advocate, is that at the end of this war we may put behind international law, which thus far is a mere conglomeration of precedents, a force; that we may in some way organize an Amphictyonic Council of the civilized nations of the world; and that we shall make the outlaw nations bring their controversies to that tribunal under all ordinary and normal circumstances.

"The municipal law says to me that I shall not attack the Senator from Idaho, but shall bring him into court to settle any controversy I may have with him; but the law does not say to me that if the Senator from Idaho attacks me, I shall stop and propose to leave the

question in controversy to arbitration, while unresistingly I leave him to continue his attack. Every nation has the right of self-defense; and, of course, in arriving at the conclusion I have indicated we will not erect any structure that will make a nation which has been attacked, stop for breathing time and leave the question of resisting attack to arbitration. My dream, however, is that there shall be somewhere, sometime, somehow on this earth, a 'parliament of man, a federation of the world,' where 'the commonsense of most shall hold the fretful realms in awe.'

"I also dream of a time when we will be rid of that form of individual or family insanity that makes a man or a family imagine that he or they have a 'divine right to rule,' and that God and they exist as a private partnership of overlords on the surface of this earth."

These dreams were never of personal glorification, and so, perhaps, John Sharp would get all the madder when some harsh voice jeered at a vision for the betterment of mankind.

"What's that? What's that?" He cocked up both ears and listened to a letter that was being

read in debate. Then he demanded to see the letter himself, and got it.

MR. WILLIAMS. "Ah! Here it is. 'Fools are running around dreaming foolish dreams, making much noise and disturbing sober thought.'

"Fools are running around dreaming foolish dreams! Jesus Christ dreamt it. David, the sweet singer of Israel, dreamt it. The poet Tennyson dreamt it. All these people are fools in the opinion of this Missouri lawyer.

"Mr. President, if I believed, as the Senator from Missouri seems to believe, that ever again this disgraceful spectacle could come upon the world's arena, to be witnessed helplessly by humanity, then I would cease to believe in God, and I would cease to believe in the common reason and the common sense and the common conscience of men, His creatures.

"The Senator tells me, 'It may be very wicked but war is inevitable.' When fifteen or more pioneers went into Missouri or into Mississippi in the early days, the very first thing they did was to form a league of individuals, just like the only league of nations I want. They said:

"'We have no government, we have no

A VIEW OF THE GABLE END OF THE ORIGINAL HOUSE

This shows the queer dormer windows which light the upper rooms and form such narrow little niches within

sheriff, we have no clerk; we have no law that binds us; but the man who steals a horse, or kills one of us, we will hang.' So they formed a league of individuals without any court. Every pioneer that settled any part of America went into it with other pioneers, with common sense and common conscience, and his judgment that said: 'We must have law, we must have order, we must have justice, we must have righteousness, and we *will* have it, if we have to hang the fellow that interferes with it.' Now, that is what we are trying to say, through a league of nations, to Germany or anybody else.

"We are simply going to say that hereafter, by the grace of God and by our own might, conjoined and not disunited, that 'any civilized country, or country pretending to be civilized, that dares to make war upon another without either consenting to arbitration when it is offered, or offering arbitration upon its own part, shall become the common enemy of mankind,' and we will deal with that country as the early pioneers in Missouri dealt with a horsethief or a murderer, that is all.

"Long ago individuals agreed that it was bet-

ter to suffer a little wrong now and then than it was to let each man be his own judge and his own executioner, and the nations of the world have to learn the same thing.

"What keeps the world in order? What makes you carry your controversies to the court, instead of settling them with pistol or knife, is the fact that the court *has force behind it.* And what actually occurs is this: In not one case in ten thousand does the court ever have to show its force. Your mere consciousness of the fact that the force is behind the court, keeps you in order."

MR. REED: "Would the Senator be willing to submit the Monroe Doctrine to an international court, the majority of which would be composed of Europeans?"

MR. WILLIAMS: "Mr. President, if what I hope to see is consummated, the Monroe Doctrine, like a great many other things, will cease to be at all, because there will take its place a Monroe Doctrine of the entire world, and a Monroe Doctrine merely confined to the Western Hemisphere will cease to exist."

At that period of bustle and rush when an

American army was being gathered, most civilians busied themselves in suggesting brand-new military regulations. And the Senate offered a resolution to the effect that no American citizen who was an officer or a private in the American Army or Navy, or in any wise employed for the war service, should be permitted to take a drink, to offer a drink, or to accept a drink from anybody, under a criminal penalty.

MR. WILLIAMS: "There is great danger of hurting, if not destroying, a great cause by creating a reaction, as strong a reaction as that under the reign of the restored Stuarts against the previous puritanic rule in Great Britain. If my son came to me as a lieutenant in the Army, or as a private soldier, just as I was preparing to take a toddy from my sideboard, and I should give him one, I should be punishable under this amendment. I would nevertheless offer it to him, or to any friend in my house.

"If you are going to apply that rule to the men who are going to shed their blood for the United States, you had better apply it to yourselves. We are going to shed nothing except our voices." (Laughter.)

During thirty years of Congressional service, never was his indignant Americanism more hotly exasperated than by Senate Resolution 360, that the speech of Senator LaFollette, delivered at St. Paul, "does not justify any action by the Senate."

In prompt opposition to this whitewash, the American-hearted Senator from Mississippi sprang up.

"Mr. President, I have a few words to say about that. If I understand that resolution, it means that the fault committed by the Senator from Wisconsin in his St. Paul speech is to be passed over by the Senate, without animadversion or criticism. Am I correct?

"Mr. President, as I read the speech made by the Senator from Wisconsin in St. Paul, it was a series of false statements, and not only a series of false statements but a series of false statements which must have been consciously made. I find in that speech a charge that the United States went to war to protect 'Morgan interests' of some sort or other. I find in that speech a charge that we went to war and sacrificed our children in order that rich Americans

SENATOR WILLIAMS AND POLLY

The Cudzos vine and a corner of the porch

might ride on British munition-armed ships. It is an everlasting lie that these United States went to war in order to protect any Morgan interests, or any capitalistic interests of any sort. It is also an everlasting lie that the people of these United States ever sent their boys to be fed as cannon fodder in Europe in order that rich American citizens might ride upon munition ships. It is an everlasting lie that the *Lusitania* was armed, or had dangerous explosives aboard, and that any law of the United States was ever violated by any American citizen who took passage upon the *Lusitania.* It is an everlasting lie that the one hundred and fourteen American citizens—men, women and children—who went to their graves unknelled and unsung upon that memorable day of German barbarity, went there to uphold the doctrine of capitalism, or of money-making, or of the right to protect a foreign ship under a foreign flag by American citizenship, while it was carrying dangerous explosives.

"I for one do not want the history of the United States to be written so that my children or grandchildren shall read that I sat quietly

still while the United States Senate said that all that made no difference. I have seen ignorant boys arrested and tried and condemned, some few of them to death, and some more of them to prison, for doing things and saying things that amounted to much less than this St. Paul speech.

"I have no personal animosity to the Senator from Wisconsin, and he knows it. I have been good to him in days that have gone by, and he knows it; but I have no glad hand of welcome to extend to any enemy of my country when my country is in war, and I have no glad hand of welcome to extend to any man that slanders my country, that tells falsehoods about it, and I do not care whether he is a Senator or whether he is a plowboy, except that I can forgive the plowboy because of his ignorance.

"Then he goes a little bit further in that speech at St. Paul, and has the audacity to say that Mr. Bernstorff, as ambassador from Germany, gave us notice to keep off the ship. Gave us notice! Gave *us!* Who in the devil are we? We are the American people under the providence of God. This little miserable Kaiser, who

has since been dethroned to the gratification of the entire world, gave us notice, through his ambassador, that we might be hurt if we went on this ship; and then we were guilty of audacity and folly and insanity because we went on the ship, and one hundred and fourteen American citizens—most of them women and children—did not have cowardice enough to take the German warning and keep off the ship, but went down as Americans do go down, thank God, not a man of them deserting his post; every man giving place to a woman or a child.

"My children are to believe, and their children's children are to believe, that this Senate is going to pass over this thing in silence! That it was perfectly allowable for a man, provided he was a United States Senator, to say that these men, women and children had no business there; they had no place there; they ought to have taken the warning of the German ambassador; they ought to have been scared by the German Kaiser; they ought to have been cowards, and not Americans!

"There is a peculiar thing about humanity, Mr. President. In its ordinary days it loves

pleasure. I understand why it loves pleasure. I love it more than anybody. But when the days of crises come, the great days that invoke the human soul, the ordinary man rises above the measure which the Senator from Wisconsin meted out to him. He becomes inspired as by the voice of God running through all the history of the world. He sacrifices himself, his property, his children—and above all, his children—that is the hardest part of it. He is willing to see it all go into the melting-pot, rather than that anything false should exist. God calls to him from the depths—de profundis—and he answers with his whole soul; and, answering with his whole soul, he has no patience for any man who makes this appeal to his ordinary, everyday life. He rises above it all. He becomes the son of God.

"It is given to all of us, Mr. President, just about once in our lifetime, to rise to the heights. That time was given to all of us during this war; and those of us who did not rise to the heights were just common clay, miserable common clay, devil-impulsed common clay; and those who

could rise to the heights arose, and the American people as a whole arose.

"I do not care whether the next balance of power in the Senate between Democrats and Republicans is held by the slender vote of *one* or not. That is not disturbing me. I say that speech at St. Paul was disloyal in spirit, disloyal in words, disloyal in intendment, disloyal in effect, and disloyal with a set purpose. I say here, standing on my two feet—there is not much to me, not much physically, intellectually, or morally, the poor, weak creature that God made me, but I am not going to let my children and grandchildren misunderstand my attitude toward this resolution."

And nobody misunderstood the Senator from Mississippi.

The Great War had ended, ended with a complete answer to the prayer of the Senator from Mississippi, that Hapsburger and Hohenzollern might cease to reign. Now came the diplomats, clustered round a council table; and a war-stupefied world scarce knew what they were about. As to what they did, one says this, and

one says that. It had already been suggested, at the outset of this biography, if biography it be, that John Sharp Williams is done with political contentions. Therefore the doubtful balance of rights and wrongs shall not be argued here.

As the Senator had said, in a mood of exaltation, "It is given to all of us, just about once in our lifetime to rise to the heights." And to those heights America had risen. Then came the period of spiritual reaction, the letting down of taut-stretched nerves.

After the Treaty of Versailles, and after the refusal of this republic to enter this League of Nations, a persistent gossip circulated that Senator Williams had become so embittered that he meant to retire from public life. Many uncomplimentary remarks were credited to him—"debited" might be thought more accurate—which specified various humble creatures that he'd prefer to be, rather than be a U. S. Senator. Some rumors went the length of intimating that John had lost faith in the American people themselves.

It is a fact that Senator Williams felt griev-

ously disappointed over the failure, in this country, of the League; not wholly on account of that failure itself, but because of what he considered the partizan expediency and small-bore prejudices that contributed so largely to its defeat. The Senator feels that if the League had been a success, as it must have been if strongly supported by the United States, that the Democratic Party would have got credit for it, while the Republicans would have been kept out of power for many, many years; and that this was the largest single factor in reaching a decision against the League. Which might also have happened had the partizan shoe been on the other foot.

Whether or not certain caustic strictures imputed to Senator Williams be true, the fact is that John Sharp entered life and politics with the firm belief, amounting to a religion, that whatever the people did must ultimately be right. That's the theory of all popular governments. But is it the practical fact? Does the mass of our people always choose wisely, either in selecting officials or in passing upon campaign issues?

This old-fashioned Senator has a singularly direct method of considering facts; and on the facts every professional politician after thirty years of service must come to have many doubts which he cares not to express. For the crime of crimes in an office-seeker would be to admit that any sovereign voter might make a mistake if he were suddenly called from the plow to manage our national affairs. No candidate can be elected Justice of the Peace on any such platform. If he wants to win, he must proclaim that the nearest blacksmith could successfully handle our finances, and that the longest-legged farmer boy would fall into no error on the Supreme Bench. But no school-child with three grains of gumption can possibly believe such stuff.

Nor does any man of experience believe that voters at the ballot box express their thoughtful convictions on the tariff, on the League of Nations, or any other complicated issue. A few, a very, very few of them do; but the great mass, even of intelligent business men, have no definite convictions, because they will take no trouble to inform themselves. Most of us are Democrats

JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS, Jr.

or Republicans for the same reason that we are white or black, because we were born that way.

Every politician, whether he be patriot or demagogue, has been ground in the same mill, and Mr. Williams, like the rest of them, knows the threads upon which elections actually hang. He has seen how voters cast their ballots for a candidate because the candidate contributes to repair their church; and how statesmen far higher up will vote for or against a great question of public policy obedient to the party whiplash. These things are, and elections are decided by them.

Be all this, however, as it may, after thirty years of public service, John Sharp Williams yet remains an idealist, though the practical situation is far from his ideal. To that extent he may be disillusioned; but embittered he most certainly is not.

Anyhow, his term neared its expiration. He might have held the Senatorial seat by merely indicating that he would accept a re-election. But he said, "No"; he was tired of the Senate, and wanted to come home.

So in March, 1923, United States Senator

John Sharp Williams returned to the same wood-fire beside which Grandma Sharp had sat in the long ago, when her needles went click-click-click, and she questioned little Johnny about joining the Episcopalians. Since then the boy has knocked at various doors and investigated many problems for himself, as one may presently discover by visiting the ex-Senator in his retirement on Cedar Grove Plantation. There you will find the most genial and unembittered gentleman that ever mixed a toddy, or told a yarn.

RETIREMENT

The streams are his, the woods his own,
The southern acres, cotton-grown,
The quiet of paternal hall,
All these are his, but more than all,
The Peace is his.

VIII

"'Tis done, Sinbaldo;
Behind us leave contentions
Of the legislative hall;
We'll mix a genial julep now
And smile upon it all."

ON his plantation at Cedar Grove, in Yazoo County, Mississippi, if one be so fortunate, he may now see the ex-Senator. Perhaps the visitor is an old friend, and expected. He steps off the train at Yazoo City, being met by a tall and much sunburned young man, Mr. Allison Williams, son of the Senator, a civil engineer now actively engaged in building a highway through Panther Swamp. To construct a road through Panther Swamp is no job for a mollycoddle, as the young engineer's anti-Molly clothes most abundantly testify. This is not Allison's pink-tea suit. It must endure thirty days' wear per month. A Ford sedan waits outside the station, driven by John Sharp Williams, Jr., also working on the same road. John Sharp, Jr., wears a broad-brimmed gray hat, a blue cotton shirt, and

the crease has long departed from his trousers. Evidently this John recks no more of creases than his father did. He's working. He's building a road. The brothers are not arrayed for social effect. Neither is their Ford, whose unashamed upholstery tells of incongruous articles transported from Yazoo City to the job. And it is of their work that the two boys talk, with interest and animation, while on the way home.

Between the town of Yazoo City and Cedar Grove Plantation lies an excellent graveled roadway which Grandfather Sharp would never have dared hope for when he first cleared away the forest and began planting cotton among the stumps. After driving ten miles, the auto turns in at a wide gate, held open by a diminutive negro boy who grins as he picks up his nickel from the dust. If that nickel had chanced to be a dime, and the grin twice as wide, the top of that boy's head would have fallen off.

From the outer gate we follow a curving plantation road, that goes winding across the pasture, and circles round a pond to an inner gate which opens upon the lawn. Beyond this

THE SENATOR AT SEVENTY

second gate, under a big oak-tree, the Senator himself sits in a rocking-chair.

No haberdasher would brag on this statesman as a "swell dresser." He wears the legal amount of clothes, one pair of baggy linen pantaloons, one white shirt, and easy shoes. With the thermometer simmering around ninety, he goes without a coat.

The Ford stops. The visitor's satchel is carried within, while he himself is made welcome on the lawn. This welcome is very simple—a word or two, a smile, a nod at a chair, the scratching of matches, two puffs of smoke, and the visitor settles down as if he'd been there all his life. Conversation doesn't seem to begin, but merely to continue from the point where it left off, months before, at a two-cover dinner in Washington.

The man called "John" has walked with kings and never lost the common touch. To him, his friends have always remained the real, the vital things of life. But he makes no palaver over them. His feeling, perhaps, is stronger for its silence.

The old house, builded by Grandfather Sharp,

stands unchanged, and seems precisely the cradle from which men like John Sharp Williams must come. Grandfather was probably his own architect. His plantation home is built of wood, white, two stories, with three sets of green-painted dormer windows in its roof. These queer little gabled cubbies front north, east, and south. Beneath them, two main hallways cross each other at right angles, leaving a room twenty feet square in each corner. To the rear, lower and disconnected, stands the important dining-room and kitchen, made of brick. Originally there was a considerable space between this and the house, but winter gales howled through that opening, and the Senator couldn't skirmish out to breakfast in his dining-room without wearing an overcoat. Chill winds cut him nigh in two. So he blocked that refrigerating passage with an additional bedroom on either side.

At the proper time a guest will attain the dining-room and see what comes from the kitchen; but first his eyes explore the hall. What is there belongs there, books, pictures, furniture. This hallway has never been "done" by an interior decorator, just as its owner would

not think of surrendering himself for adornment, into the hands of an exterior decorator. It is not a "Period" hallway, but a place for human beings to live in, to sit down, to smoke, to chat, to toss things about. No frippery, no pretense, no stiffness. The wide, wide space is cool and homey; a guest is welcome, and feels it. Hangings and portières, and gilded cornices, would add nothing to his sense of ease. The center table, where the two great hallways cross, is there for use, not for admiration. It holds a pitcher of icewater, with somebody's hat flung down beside it. There the little granddaughter has laid her book. By the way, this child of twelve is devouring "Oliver Twist," wholly out of style for children in city apartments. The Senator himself happens to be re-reading a romance of Sir Walter Scott's, with Sabatini's "Life of Cesare Borgia" and "Damaged Souls" by Gamaliel Bradford. Near his books lie his ash-tray, his matches, pipe and tobacco. And there are the comfortable chairs, with their seductive invitation to sit down, to be at peace, to chat, to read, or just to think.

Look at the books: books, books everywhere,

in sectional cases, which no finicky decorator would permit in such a dignified old house. But they protect his precious volumes. Books are for use, not for show. Every cover bears evidence of handling.

Here is new fiction in brave colors, old editions in tattered bindings, books that for generations have been the counselors of men. Open any one of them at random, and you will see how intimate has been their counsel, for they are full of lines underscored, with marginal notations made by the hand of a student and a book lover. He seems to sit and talk with his books, answering, commenting, criticising, as with a sympathetic friend.

There's a singularly cordial suggestion about John's books. Sometimes the genuine booklover is permitted to peep at a rich man's library, where he wouldn't dare to turn a key or examine a volume. The rich man's volumes are not there to be read and handled and soiled; they are there to be inspected through the glass, in row upon row of gorgeous bindings, to impress the beholder that the financier has tastes of a literary connoisseur.

But not the Senator's books, which are his friends. A motley mixture, like his human friends, some in fine array and some in overalls; all sorts and conditions of books. Any kindred soul that even so much as glances at these books, must be drawn nearer to the man who handles and who loves them. Plainly John has chosen his volumes on the same basis that he selects his cronies, one by one, individually. Choice books do not come in sets, nor good friends come in mobs.

Grandfather Sharp knew nothing of gas or electricity; and modern fixtures do not blemish the high ceilings of the house he built. Student lamps, soft and steady-burning, light the reading-table in the hall, but leave queer shadows to play about the corners.

In many respects the house is just as the pioneer planter left it, full of associations. A pair of sabres crossed above a doorway, are silent reminders of a grandfather who fought under Jefferson Davis for the Stars and Stripes in Mexico, and of a father killed beneath the Stars and Bars at Shiloh.

Among his memories the retired Senator now

moves noiselessly, choosing a volume from its shelf and peering through his spectacles, perhaps at a Smollett, perhaps at a Heine in German, a Beranger, or a Scarron in the French. Sometimes he wanders about the lawn, trying to recall where certain old trees once stood. His favorite mimosa is gone, like many of his comrades. So he drifts about the place, much as a man of threescore-years-and-ten might ramble through familiar streets, pausing here and there to shake his head as he misses the face of a vanished playmate.

During the long summer evenings it is a privilege to sit upon that lawn and chat with John Sharp Williams. In the twilight a family group assembles beneath the trees, two sons wearied from their hard day's toil at Panther Swamp, their mother, and Mrs. John Sharp Williams, Jr. Little Polly, the granddaughter, goes to fetch a quilt and spreads it on the grass, for her father to sprawl upon and relax as he listens. Or perhaps he dozes. That group might well have been the same, in spirit and tradition, as those who gathered here a century ago. And they talk of those days, of bygone

systems of agriculture, of shifting labor conditions, and of changes that have fallen upon their South.

Critics of our Southern country are prone to assert that we live in the past, and spend our time bewailing departed glories. Let those critics sit and listen here; then, if such miracle were possible, their minds would change. Nowhere would they find a company of people more hopeful, more constructive, with their faces turned more steadfast to the light. Nowhere would the skeptic hear a conversation more versatile. One moment the Senator is telling a comical negro story; and perhaps the next moment he discusses the reasons that make the Poles the best linguists in Europe, because their language contains every vocal sound that is used in other tongues.

Mostly their conversation is humorous, of the soil and not the Senate. The plantation system of Grandfather Sharp was very simple. His markets were far distant, and costs of transportation prohibitive. The land itself must produce everything necessary to feed man and beast, as well as clothe their labor. In those days Grand-

father parcelled out the negroes to their separate tasks—plowmen, cotton pickers, hostlers, weavers, spinners, shoemakers, hatmakers, basketmakers, house servants—all had their distinct duties, which were so light that the Senator often comments upon the appalling economic waste of slavery. No master, however hard he drove them, could get more than a half-day's work from his slave, as measured by what a free man can accomplish. For instance, in the big square library where the Senator sits and reads at night, it was then the duty of a certain negro to keep up the fire, with several other fires. That negro was valued at fifteen hundred dollars, and did practically nothing else. In summer, he half-way tended the horses, with a lick and a promise at gardening. But on an ante-bellum plantation, which produced its own foodstuffs, the cost of living was so cheap that people managed to get along.

Such are matters that the Senator discusses, half humorously, half philosophically, in the summer evenings on his lawn.

After the fall of the Confederacy every cotton planter went broke. He had no labor, no work

stock, no fences, often no roof to shelter him, nothing but the bare land itself, without tools or means of cultivation. But his alluvial acres were certain to raise cotton, which the world needed. So the merchant would advance supplies to the planter, and the banker would lend him money to make a crop, provided he planted cotton. Cottonseed, growing in the ground, was an accepted asset, the tangible security for a loan. But no other crop was good for advances. No planter could borrow five cents on a thousand acres of corn, or oats, or garden truck. He was compelled to plant cotton, and plant cotton he did. This put an end to the independent, self-sustaining plantation. Under a cotton-and-credit system, the planter must buy his food in town, on credit; even his corn, his oats, and hay. In turn he must supply free tenants with everything they ate, drank and wore. The planter must credit his tenants on the same basis that the merchant credited him. Free negroes almost universally refused to make a vegetable garden, or to raise a pig. They expected to pay for everything out of the crop. The merchant, in his turn, bought on credit. Credit was the fetich

and the damnation of the South. But they were an optimistic people, fatuously hoping to make a big crop, and pay with cash derived from the sale of cotton.

Under such conditions, year by year, most planters fell deeper and more hopelessly into debt. From bad crops, worse management, and inefficient labor, plantations changed hands, and few of the oldtimers were able to hold their heads above water. This was the general situation of the South when John Sharp Williams inherited Cedar Grove.

After leaving the United States Senate, Mr. Williams expected to spend the remainder of his life in upbuilding the property, in making it a model farm. For that purpose he took his son John into partnership. Meanwhile the boll weevil had appeared, and the raising of cotton became such a gamble that the South again passed through an agricultural revolution. In fact, the weevil proved far more disastrous than the Civil War. Old ways would no longer serve. Merchants refused to lend money or advance supplies upon the faith of a crop, when it was extremely hazardous whether any crop could be

made. And planters were unable to feed their labor from the time their seed went into the ground until their lint was ready to sell. By wholesale the negroes flocked into towns.

Through all this general chaos and uncertainty, the partnership of Senator and Son couldn't pull together. The old way and the new way were different. So the Senator reluctantly abandoned his idea of becoming an active farmer, and leased the Cedar Grove property to young John Sharp, which leaves the father with nothing to do.

Idleness, in time, may prove irksome to the Senator, but today's visitor at Cedar Grove must feel grateful that he has leisure to talk.

Most men delight in telling stories, idle yarns, too frequently dependent upon vulgarity for their punch. Those that are told by the Senator are worth while, as they more or less consciously epitomize the history of a civilization that has passed.

For instance, there was old Peter, a part and a product of bygone times. One night before the big fire in the library, a number of gentlemen were chatting with Grandfather Sharp, when

somebody remarked that he had never known a really honest negro. "Well, *I* have," Grandfather spoke up. "Ellen, go out and call Peter." When Peter came to receive his Master's orders, Grandfather introduced him to "Colonel Davis." "Colonel, this is my man Peter, as honest a man as ever lived. I would trust him with my life." Colonel Davis arose, tall, stately, courteous, and shook hands with the slave who was honest, saying, "I am *proud* to know you, Peter. I have several honest men like yourself." To the last day of his life Peter bragged of meeting Colonel Davis, never suspecting that he had shaken hands with the soldier-statesman who became President of the Confederacy. There was much of good in the old way, but, like Thomas Jefferson, the Senator says, "I shudder to think of slavery when I remember that God is just," though as a child he saw nothing of the evils, but only remembers its kindlier, sweeter side.

Slavery left its heritage to the white man of that class which continued to feel a sense of responsibility for the negro long after the institution itself was abolished. This responsibility,

and the enduring harmony between whites and blacks on Cedar Grove, is shown by the fact that up to a few years ago a large part of the plantation labor was ex-slaves and their descendants, with others that had intermarried among them. After emancipation the bulk of Cedar Grove negroes did not desert the plantation; free men and women remained as tenants of their old masters. Such a relationship, voluntarily carried forward, through lean years and boll weevil, bears its own testimony.

A gentleman from the North was once dining at Cedar Grove. To dine at Cedar Grove is to wipe out Mason and Dixon's line, except as an imaginary boundary between hot biscuit and cold light-bread. Ignoring sectional lines, this Northerner grabbed a biscuit whenever one came near him. Between passings of the plate, he'd reach out and get another for himself. Every few minutes a servant-girl appeared from the kitchen with a plate of steaming biscuits, until the stranger expressed his curiosity to see that inexhaustible fountain of biscuits. After dinner he was shown into the kitchen, where old Alice, in white apron and cap, presided at the

stove. And if Alice had been trained for exhibition, she could not better have played her part. "Yas, suh! yas, suh," she bowed again and again. "I was born right here on dis plantation. Been here all my life, whilst Marse Johnny warnt knee-high to a duck, meddlin' wid ev'ybody. Yas, suh; yas, suh. I stayed here wid ole Miss, indurin' o' de whole war. Huh! nobody on *dis* place warnt skeered o' Yankees. Us was *quality* folks. Quality folks naturally can't git skeered."

A younger woman, helper in the kitchen, was asked if she also had been born on Cedar Grove, and hung her head in shame when she admitted:

"No, suh; no, suh. I warnt 'zactly *born* on dis place. But hereabouts, hereabouts." If it were impossible for the mother to reach Cedar Grove in time, her daughter insisted that the sore-pressed woman had done her utmost.

This same Aunt Alice married Rob. After the Civil War they tended, together, twenty acres of cotton. Their crop was a partnership, but Alice wanted something of her very own, and worked her "Mammy" rabbit-foot to secure a tiny garden-patch next to their cabin, about a quarter of an acre. During the year they drew

their rations, on credit, from Marse Johnny, and when settlement time rolled around, Alice and Rob brought five bales of cotton to the gin, one bale considerably under the average size, weighing four hundred and twenty pounds.

"Marse Johnny," old Rob began, "dat lightest bale belongs to Alice. You kin jest pay *her* de money on dat. She made it on *her* patch; an' co'se she 'zires to keep it."

"That's wonderful!" exclaimed the Senator. "*Wonderful!* Four hundred and twenty pounds of lint cotton on a *quarter of an acre?* The world's record! Listen, Rob," the Senator continued, "I must send that bale to New Orleans, and exhibit it at the Cotton Exchange. They'll ship it to New York. Four hundred and twenty pounds on a quarter of an acre! You'll hear folks braggin about you and Alice, for being the *finest cotton raisers on earth.*"

"Yas, suh, Marse Johnny, yas, suh." Rob blinked at Alice and Alice batted both eyes at Rob. Their scheme was to get that particular bale free from the year's debt for supplies, but Alice had overplayed their hand by claiming too much, and now began to take some back.

"Marse Johnny," Rob explained, "co'se Alice ain't made *all* dat cotton on her patch. She made 'bout seventy-five pounds. De rest of it she picked off *my* lan'. Us jest 'greed 'twixt ourselves for her to claim dat much."

"Oh! I'm sorry—sorry," the Senator expressed his disappointment. "So I'll credit Alice with *one* hundred pounds out of your bale, and because she's such a fine cook, I'll add another hundred pounds to that myself."

Years came, and more years, to Cedar Grove. Little Johnny and the black playmates of his childhood were growing old together. Late one afternoon Rob hobbled up to the big house, a white-haired patriarch leaning heavily upon his staff. "Marse Johnny," he asked the Senator, "Marse Johnny, can't you git me one o' dem pensions which niggers gits for jinin' de Confederick Army?"

That was perfectly true. Rob had been active in the Confederate service, not as a combatant, but as one of the teamsters whom Grandfather Sharp had sent to the front. Unfortunately, however, his case did not fall within the provisions of a Mississippi statute which grants a

State pension to bodyservants who followed their masters to war. Senator Williams thinks that other faithful black men, serving as teamsters and laborers, are as much entitled to aid in their helpless age as those who were bodyservants to officers. But they are not so nominated in the statute, and the Senator personally rectified its omission. "All right, Rob," he said. "I'll give you a house to live in, and enough land to raise your own green food. Then you must come here on the first day of every month and get five dollars, cash, for life."

Did Rob come? He did. Calendars might be misprinted, sun and moon might go astray, but thereafter the clocks on Cedar Grove Plantation were set by the punctual tap-tap-tapping of Rob's stick, as he appeared at eight o'clock sharp, on the first morning of every month to draw five dollars.

"Lordee, Marse Johnny," old Rob's daughter complained. "Dat pension money is teetotally ruinated daddy. He say his workin' days is over. Ugh! Daddy won't even git up to fotch in a stick o' stove wood."

This reminiscence brought on a general dis-

cussion of pensions, correct and just that the nation should provide for its soldiers, but with its inevitable effect upon negro beneficiaries. Thousands of Southern negroes ceased to be productive factors in the community at the very instant when they began drawing a Civil War pension. Their working days were over. And a bonus, if it be paid to young negroes, will automatically remove other thousands from the ranks of usefulness until their money be spent.

To the general conversation on the lawn, Mrs. Williams frequently contributes a good story: Long-legged Amos was a favorite on the plantation, with a wise head for getting what he wanted out of the white folks. Amos craved twenty-five dollars, to be paid back if Amos made a crop. But he knew that for the purpose he meant to spend it, neither the Senator nor Mr. John would advance a cent. So Amos hung around the big house all morning, keeping vigilant watch until he saw that the men were gone. Then he picked his chance when Mrs. Williams was in the yard among her flowers, and could see Amos coming from afar off. Amos came, came in a mighty hurry, and Mrs. Williams wondered.

There must be trouble, or sickness or death in Amos' family. And the kind lady prepared to listen, prepared to help.

Up rushed Amos, hat in hand, breathless. "Oh, Miss Betty, Miss Betty, whar's Marse Johnny? Or Mister John? Either one?"

"Both gone to town, Amos,"—as Amos well knew. He'd seen them go.

"Den, Miss Betty, maybe you kin lemme have twenty-five dollars, right quick?"

"Why, certainly, Amos, if—"

"Yas'm. Yas'm. I'm 'bleeged to have it."

After Mrs. Williams had returned from the house and given Amos the twenty-five, she inquired, "What's the trouble, Amos? Children sick?"

"No'm, Miss Betty," the negro answered, backing away.

"You haven't been arrested?"

"No'm, tain't dat"—putting more distance between them.

"Then why do you need that money?"

"Well, Miss Betty, y'onderstan', I aims to give a funeral."

"Give a funeral? Who's dead?"

"Miss Betty, I don't rightly know de name o' dat ooman; but I aims to give de funeral Sunday." Amos kept backing off and escaped.

The fact was that a negro woman from the neighborhood had died in the Insane Asylum at Jackson. Relatives or friends might have the remains shipped home for interment by paying expenses. And this is what Amos did; though he was neither relative nor friend, didn't even know the woman's name, but only itched to liven up the tedium of country life, and have the glory of giving a function.

Next Monday morning Mrs. Williams saw Amos and asked, "Amos, did everybody have a nice time yesterday?"

"No'm, Miss Betty. Tain't rained for sech a while, an' dem roads is so dusty, twarn't much pleasure givin' dat funeral."

Presently young John Sharp sits up with a laugh and tells what happened at the gin. On account of protracted drouth his ponds had gone dry, and he was digging a well, trying to get water for his boilers. Black Cato was the well-digger, besides being one of the joint-treasurers of his church. For the better part of the after-

noon young John had noticed five other negro men loafing around the well, and finally asked them what they wanted.

"Us wants Cato to go to town wid us an' git our church money outen de bank, forty-three dollars."

"Cato's busy," young John objected; "we've got to have water for this gin."

"Yas, suh; but us can't git our money widout Cato—all six of us is got to sign one check."

This wise precaution was made necessary by the defalcation of various church treasurers. So young John called for Cato to climb out of the well, and said:

"Cato, these boys want to get their church money. Have you got that forty-three dollars in bank?"

"Yas, suh; de money's dere all right."

"And all six of you must sign the check?"

"Yas, suh. Dat's de way us put it in."

"Very good. Go in the store and make out your check. Then I'll give you the money on it, and you need not leave your work."

"But dat won't do, Mister John; dat won't do."

"Why not?"

" 'Cause to git dis money out de bank, it takes six names on de check, an' *six faces at de bank winder.* Six names an' six faces."

To this peaceful lawn, secluded and sheltered by venerable trees, it would seem that no turbulence of politics or blast of war could ever penetrate. Yet here has sat the anxious mother, waiting for tidings of her three boys at the front. Here has sat the wife, eager to hear returns from campaigns of her husband. But all of that is past. In this summer twilight that same wife and mother now sits smiling and listening, and talking, too, with John and with John's friend. For John's friend is her friend, always.

Looking backward from the lawn at Cedar Grove, it's a far, far cry to the day in Memphis when little Johnny, aged eleven, began his search for truth. The child is father to the man, and it was characteristic of him that he should go his way alone, seeking and searching for himself, arriving at his own decision. And if Senator Williams subsequently developed one trait more strongly than another, it was this.

His first venture in politics was like unto his first venture in religion. He did his own thinking, and went counter to the crowd because the crowd seemed wrong. And he won them over; and he held them.

Politically in Mississippi, John Sharp Williams stands above all others as the most successful man of his generation. And Mississippians can be the prouder, for he gained no point by trickery but all by truth. Yet how his fun-loving eyes would twinkle if a friend were from his career to point a moral and adorn a tale! He'd laugh at the notion of being held up as an example and a guide to youth, and at the same time feel the same sweet kindliness toward his erring friend that his friends all feel for John.

Not of every politician can be said at the close of thirty years' service what was said at the beginning:

> "Statesman, yet friend to truth, of soul sincere,
> In action faithful and in honor clear;
> Who broke no promise, served no private end,
> Who gained no title and who lost no friend."

THE END